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THE
HUNTING GROUP – HUNTING TERRITORY COMPLEX AMONG THE MISTASSINI INDIANS

By

Edward S. Rogers

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By

Edward S. Rogers

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CONTENTS

Page

RÉSUMÉ 1

INTRODUCTION 2
- Acknowledgments 2
- The study 2

Chapter I

THE ENVIRONMENT 5
- Geographical location 5
- Physiography 5
- Climate 7
- Flora 9
- Fauna 10

Chapter II

HISTORICAL SKETCH 13
- 1600–1670 13
- 1670–1800 14
- 1800–1900 17
- 1900–1955 18

Chapter III

SOCIAL FEATURES 20
- Introduction 20
- Population 20
- The band 24
- Nuclear family 27

Chapter IV

SUBSISTENCE 32
- Introduction 32
- Degree of exploitation 32
- Trade relations 37
- Technique of exploitation 40

Chapter V

THE YEARLY CYCLE 44
- Introduction 44
- Fall travel 45
- Fall hunt 46
- Winter camp 48
- Early winter trapping 48
- Late winter trapping 50
- Spring trapping 51
- Spring travel 52
- Summer activities 52

PAGE

CHAPTER VI

THE HUNTING GROUP........ 54
Introduction........ 54
Size........ 55
Composition........ 55
Economic unit........ 58
Political unit........ 62
Social unit........ 63
Religious unit........ 64
Group stability........ 67

CHAPTER VII

THE HUNTING TERRITORY........ 69

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY........ 74
1600–1800........ 74
1800–1850........ 75
1850–1900........ 75
1900–1950........ 76

CHAPTER IX

ANALYSIS........ 77
Factors responsible for small hunting groups........ 77
Mistassini and Montagnais in the past........ 81
Factors responsible for the development of hunting territories........ 82
Examination of previous theories........ 86
Conclusion........ 88

REFERENCES........ 90

TABLES

TABLE 1. Population of the Mistassini........ 23
2. Numbers and pounds of game secured from the environment by the Alfie Matoush Hunting Group........ 35
3. Numbers and pounds of game secured by the Peetawabano Hunting Group........ 36
4. Numbers of furs secured at Mistassini during 1827–8, 1864–5, 1912–14, and 1953–4........ 38
5. Numbers of furs secured, converted to units of three hunters........ 38
6. Quantities of European foods bought by the Mistassini in 1865 and 1954 39
7. Hunting group and territorial sizes and population density among the bands of the Eastern Subarctic........ 57

CHART

CHART 1. The Yearly Cycle........ 47

MAPS

MAP 1. The area of Lake Mistassini........ 6
2. Bands inhabiting South-Central Quebec........ 21
3. Matoush hunting territory........ 49

THE HUNTING GROUP — HUNTING TERRITORY COMPLEX AMONG THE MISTASSINI INDIANS

RÉSUMÉ

Il s'agit ici d'une analyse des facteurs qui ont influé sur l'adoption de territoires de chasse par les Indiens Mistassinis du sud central du Québec et sur la composition de leurs groupes de chasseurs. En vue de dégager les éléments qui déterminent l'ampleur des groupes de chasseurs et l'adoption de leurs territoires de chasse, l'auteur a étudié l'interaction du milieu naturel, du contact avec des gens d'origine européenne et de tous les divers aspects de la culture mistassinienne, exception faite de la mythologie et de la langue. Il s'est servi de données relatives à d'autres groupes subarctiques de l'Est pour amplifier l'importance des documents sur les Mistassinis et comme base de comparaison. Les données ayant trait aux Mistassinis d'aujourd'hui ont été recueillies au cours d'une enquête sur place en 1953-1954.

La documentation recueillie est présentée dans l'ordre suivant: esquisse du milieu, antécédents historiques avec description du contact entre Européens et Mistassinis, caractéristiques sociales, moyens de subsistance et cycle annuel d'activité. L'auteur examine ensuite en détail la composition du groupe de chasseurs et l'étendue du territoire de chasse. Puis il trace un sommaire des faits historiques qui influent sur le groupe de chasseurs et sur le territoire de chasse. Enfin, il analyse les données exposées.

Certains auteurs soutiennent que les petits groupes de chasseurs et leurs territoires de chasse dans l'Est subarctique sont d'origine indigène et qu'ils sont le reflet des conditions du milieu; d'autres sont d'avis que ces caractéristiques découlent d'une économie fondée sur la traite des fourrures. L'analyse de la documentation sur les Mistassinis n'établit pleinement le bien-fondé de ni l'une ni l'autre de ces deux opinions. Tout d'abord, la documentation indique que la composition du groupe de chasseurs et l'adoption d'un territoire de chasse sont des variables indépendantes, plutôt qu'interdépendantes. En second lieu, la formation du groupe de chasseurs, loin d'être soumise à une seule influence, subit celle de multiples facteurs.

Le nombre de chasseurs par groupe, resté constant depuis le début du XVIIe siècle, est nettement déterminé par un équilibre entre certains éléments contraires, dont certains tendent à diminuer le nombre de chasseurs par groupe, et d'autres, à l'accroître. Les éléments en cause sont de trois types: le rapport entre le milieu et la technologie mistassinienne; les aspects immatériels de la culture dont l'influence est indépendante du milieu; et l'avènement d'une économie fondée sur la traite des fourrures.

La documentation historique indique que les Mistassinis n'avaient pas de territoires de chasse déterminés au temps des premiers contacts avec les Européens. Ils n'en adoptèrent qu'au cours du XIXe siècle à la suite de la modification de leurs concepts du droit de propriété qu'a provoquée l'avènement de la traite des fourrures.

INTRODUCTION

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following study is a modified version of the author's doctoral dissertation presented to the Graduate Committee of the University of New Mexico in 1958. The collection of field data on which much of this study is based was made possible through a grant-in-aid from the Arctic Institute of North America under contract with the Office of Naval Research. To both of these organizations I am deeply indebted. Field-work was conducted among the Mistassini Indians of south-central Quebec in 1953–4. In the field a number of people assisted in innumerable ways. Sincere thanks are due Mr. and Mrs. Wilfrid Jefferys, of the Hudson's Bay Company, Lake Mistassini, for their kind hospitality and guidance. Mr. Jules Sesia, then of Mt. Laurier Aviation, Mr. Jimmy Stephenson of Boreal Airways, and Mr. Ron Thierry of Fecteau Airways gave much more than was required in connection with transportation services. Without the aid, consideration, and genuine interest of Alfie Matoush, the leader of the hunting group with whom the winter of 1953–4 was spent, and of the other members of this group, the work would have been greatly hampered.

Besides those who aided during the course of field-work, there were many others who encouraged and helped this study. I wish to thank Dr. Jacques Rousseau and Mr. Frederick Johnson for their support, and Mrs. Sylvia Kirby, librarian at Bristol, Vermont, for her untiring efforts to secure the publications consulted in this paper. Dr. W. W. Hill, Dr. Stanley Newman, and Dr. Harry Basehart of the Department of Anthropology, University of New Mexico, have guided the work with patience, understanding, and good will. To all of them I owe a deep debt of gratitude, especially to Dr. Basehart, who had the task of reading and correcting the initial drafts of this work. Last, but certainly not least, was the aid rendered by my wife, Jean. She participated in the field-work and has contributed much of the information in this study. All the native terms employed in this report have been transcribed by her.[1]

THE STUDY

For nearly fifty years now, various anthropologists have been concerned with the genesis of the "hunting group" and the "hunting territory system" as found among native peoples in northeastern North America. The results of their work have led to two major contrasting views regarding the origin of the hunting group and hunting territory. One theory states that these phenomena were aboriginal, predating European contact. The other theory is that they resulted from contact with Europeans, especially through the aegis of the fur trade. It seems worthwhile to re-examine this problem on the basis of new data collected among the

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[1] Rogers, Notes on Mistassini, p. 90-113.

Mistassini Indians of south-central Quebec and to re-examine previously existing data, with the hope of clarifying the conflicting interpretations. It must be stated at the outset that the arguments set forth in the following discussion apply primarily to the eastern subarctic. No consideration is given to those peoples south of the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes or west of Lake Winnipeg. In these latter areas other factors than those proposed in this paper may be involved in any analysis of the hunting groups and hunting territories as found there.

The present study is directed primarily toward an analysis of hunting groups and hunting territories among the Mistassini Indians, although it is hoped that it has wider applications within the eastern subarctic. The study has three objectives. First, an attempt is made to isolate the factors responsible for the limited variability in the size of hunting groups. The hypotheses developed through this analysis of the Mistassini data are re-examined with reference to historical and ethnological materials pertaining in general to the Montagnais.[1] Second, the history of hunting territories is traced from the time of contact, and factors responsible for their existence are tentatively determined. Finally, previous theories of the origin of hunting groups and hunting territories are examined and discussed.

The study is based on field-work conducted among the Mistassini Indians during 1953–4 and on library research.[2] The ethnographic data collected in the field form the basis for the description of the contemporary situation among the Mistassini. Published sources were used to supplement this information and to gain historical depth. Since there is a paucity of information regarding the Mistassini, it has been necessary to use data from surrounding groups. This is justifiable on the basis of similarity among all the groups of this interior area.[3] Furthermore, data from the surrounding groups have been employed for comparison and substantiation of the Mistassini material. Comparative material has, for the most part, been placed in footnotes to distinguish it from that gathered in the field. When published materials are incorporated in the body of the text, they are so indicated.

In order to see clearly the factors at work in the operation of the hunting group and hunting territory, consideration must be given to the natural environment in which the Mistassini live, as well as to their population figures, social organization, subsistence pattern, and contact with Euro-Americans. These aspects are treated first, in order to lay a foundation for a discussion of the hunting group and hunting territory. The latter two are then discussed. Finally, a section is devoted to an analysis of the data presented and a reappraisal of previous theories.

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[1] Although there is no group that can be spatially delimited on ethnographic grounds as "Montagnais," the term is convenient for use in this paper rather than the more inclusive term, Montagnais-Naskapi. Montagnais here refers to those bands inhabiting the southwestern part of the Labrador Peninsula, thus excluding the northern and eastern groups which placed greater reliance on the barren ground caribou and were more oriented toward communal hunting of this animal.

[2] Since this paper was originally prepared, the author has conducted field-work among the Ojibwa of northern Ontario, 1958–9. Data collected among these peoples substantiate the arguments advanced in this paper and add insights into the problems involved (Rogers, The Round Lake Ojibwa, 1962).

[3] Coastal groups may well be found to have varied considerably in their subsistence pattern, perhaps in a significant way, from those of the interior. On the coast, the hunting of waterfowl, eel, and seal gave a different emphasis to the yearly cycle and may have influenced the social structure and property concepts. No serious consideration has ever been given to this aspect of Montagnais-Naskapi culture, since little data exist regarding the coastal groups, who early turned inland in search of furs.

Chapter I

THE ENVIRONMENT

Geographical Location

The country inhabited by the Mistassini is located in south-central Quebec approximately equidistant between James Bay and Lake St. John (*see* Map 1). The area is on the west side of the divide which separates the drainage systems of these two bodies of water. The territory, occupied not only by the Mistassini but by several other bands, is long and narrow, extending northeast and southwest between latitude 49° 15′ and 54° N., and longitude 69° 30′ and 75° 50′ W. It includes approximately 42,500 square miles.

Physiography

The country is relatively flat with gently rolling hills, numerous muskegs, shallow ponds,[1] and streams. The soil is podzolic.[2] The low ridges of glacial debris or bedrock seldom exceed an elevation of several hundred feet. The greater part of the area is at an elevation of from 1,000 to 2,000 feet above sea-level with a slight dip to the west. The average altitude is around 1,300 feet.[3] The higher elevations occur along the eastern border, the highest being in the Otish Mountains, which rise to 3,700 feet,[4] or perhaps more. These mountains, trending roughly east and west, are situated just south of the headwaters of the Eastmain River.

The topography is the result of Pleistocene glaciation which covered the area with drift, morainic deposits, eskers, and outwash plains composed of gravel and sand. The mountains and many ridges were stripped bare of materials, exposing the bedrock. The resultant disruption of the previous drainage pattern gave rise to the many lakes, ponds, bogs, and streams found throughout the area.

The largest lake is Lake Mistassini, about 100 miles long and averaging 12 miles in width[5] with a maximum width of 16 miles and an area of 840 square miles.[6] It is situated in the southeastern part of the area. Lake Albanel, to the east of Lake Mistassini, is approximately 60 miles

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[1] Cameron and Morris, Mammals, p. 120.

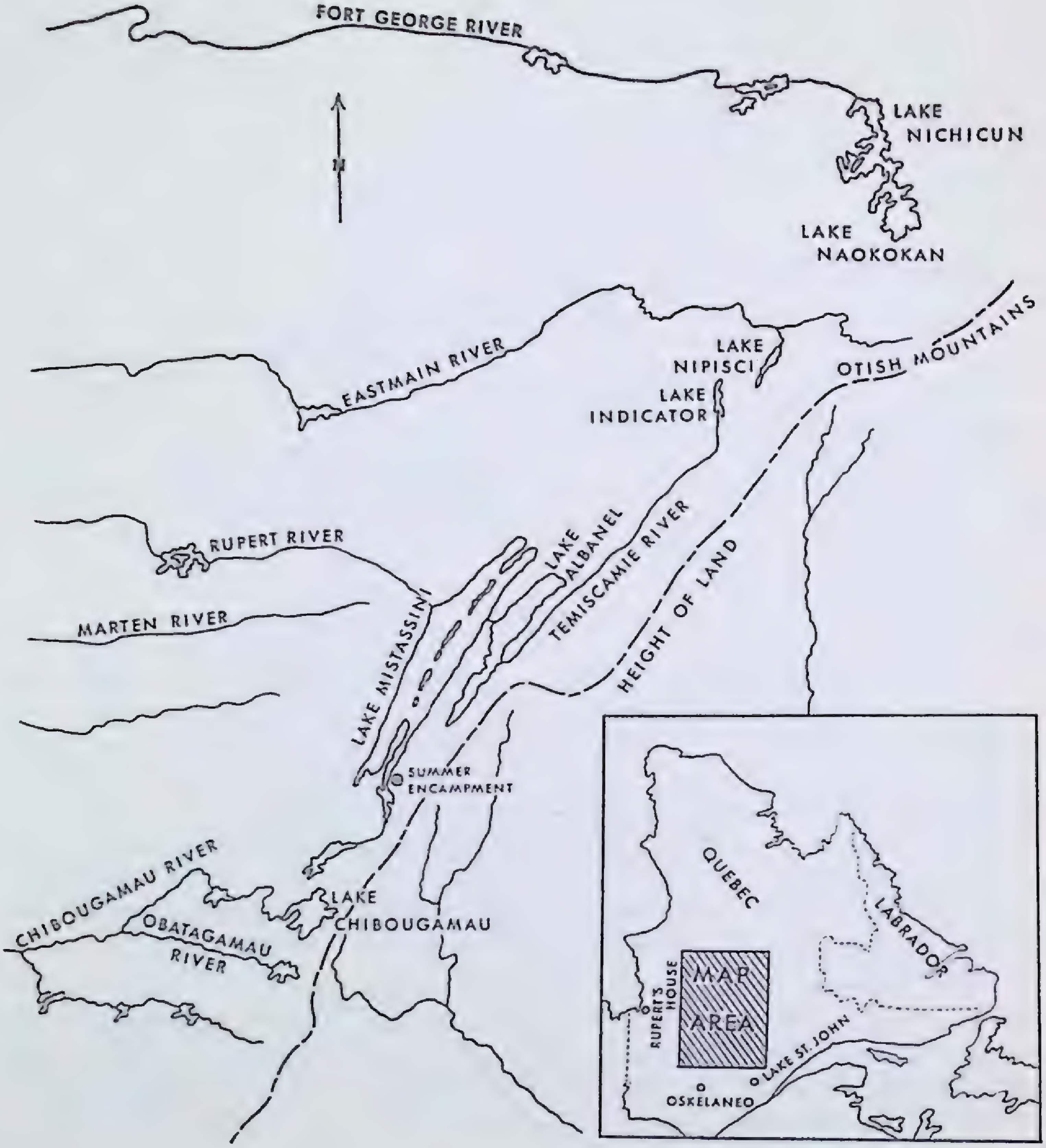
[2] Putnam, Pedogeography, Fig. 3, p. 60.

[3] Neilson, Mistassini Territory, p. 146.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Cameron and Morris, Mammals, p. 120.

[6] Neilson, Mistassini Territory, p. 148.



MAP 1 THE AREA OF LAKE MISTASSINI

long and averages 5 miles in width.[1] Practically all of the area is drained by the headwaters of rivers flowing westward to James Bay. The Eastmain River drains the country to the north of Lake Mistassini. The Temiscamie flows southwest along the eastern edge of the area and thence west into Lake Albanel, which, in turn, flows into Lake Mistassini. The latter is drained by the Rupert River. Also flowing into Lake Mistassini are the

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[1] Cameron and Morris, Mammals, p. 120-3.

Waconichi, Chalafor, Takwa, Papaskwasati, and Wabbissinon rivers. Besides those major bodies of water, there are innumerable small lakes and ponds, bogs and muskegs. Most, perhaps all, of these are acidic. The shores of the larger lakes are generally rocky.

Climate

The climate of this area is continental, with short warm summers and long cold winters, and is distinctly Arctic,[1] being chilled by the prevailing westerly winds from the cold expanses of Hudson Bay.[2] The coldest months are December, January, and February, with a January mean of —3.2° F.[3] During 1953–4, the lowest temperature recorded at Mistassini was —45° F,[4] while at Lake Nipisci at the southern edge of the Otish Mountains, with an elevation of about 2,000 feet, it was —64° F. The lowest temperature ever recorded at Mistassini was —56° F. These low temperatures occur at night, generally reaching the lowest point during the early morning, just before sunrise. During the day, the temperature rises to a maximum by early afternoon. Even on the coldest day during 1953–4, the temperature rose to —18° F at Mistassini and to —25° F at Lake Nipisci. This daily rise in temperature is important to the Mistassini, for outside activities are generally conducted only during the daylight hours.

During summer, daytime temperatures range between 40° and 90° F.[5] The nights are cool, but without frost during July and generally during June and August as well.

Summer is short. Frost may occur during September with an occasional snow flurry at higher elevations during the latter part of the month. By the end of October or early November, the ground is generally covered with snow. During this period, small lakes and streams freeze, but it is often December before the larger lakes are completely frozen. In winter there are occasional warm spells when rain falls, but these are of brief duration. At these times a thin crust may form on the snow. Otherwise, the snow is light and powdery. The ice on the lakes continues to increase in thickness through February and sometimes into March.

By the latter part of April, leads of open water begin to appear. Throughout April and early May, the surface of the snow melts during the day, and the lower levels become saturated with moisture. At night the temperature generally drops below the freezing point, and a crust forms which does not thaw until late the next morning. At this time of year, most travel is done during the early morning while the crust is still frozen. During May, the snow melts rapidly and by the middle of the month is gone except in the mountains. Ordinarily, the last snowfalls occur during this month. Simultaneously, the lakes and rivers begin to rise because of the melting snow. At first, the lake ice is apt to be covered with water, but later the ice breaks free of the shore and floats. By the middle or latter part of May, the ice becomes "rotten" and is unsafe to walk on. Strong winds break up the ice and, if from a favourable direction, move it out of the lakes and into the streams. Here the current carries the blocks away. The water is then very high but soon drops and continues to do so during the summer.

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[1] Ekblaw, Ungava, p. 104.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 104–5.

[3] Cameron and Morris, Mammals, p. 121.

[4] Information derived from records kept by the Hudson's Bay Company.

[5] Cameron and Morris, Mammals, p. 121.

Annual precipitation is not great. The total is about thirty inches, with a variation of a few inches from year to year. About two-thirds of this falls as rain during July, August, and September. Drizzles are common, but an occasional thunderstorm occurs. There are few days during summer without rain.[1] The lightning accompanying thunderstorms is responsible for many forest fires.[2] These fires are important to the economy of the Mistassini since they initiate serel stages often productive of important resources such as bear, moose, beaver, and blueberries. Extensive fires, however, disrupt the economy by destroying the favoured habitats of caribou, porcupine, and marten.[3] During the winter, snowfall varies between 100 and 125 inches,[4] but there is generally no more than 3 to 5 feet on the ground at any one time. In the Otish Mountains winds prevent the snow from accumulating to any great depth. Mistassini has 0.1 inch of snowfall[5] a hundred days each year. The greater part of the snow comes from the fronts of eastward- and northeastward-moving cyclones.[6]

Since the ground is covered with snow during the coldest weather, the soil remains unfrozen except for the upper few inches. Ice on the lakes freezes to a depth of several feet.

Northwesterly, westerly, and southwesterly winds prevail throughout the year. During summer, there is a tendency for southwesterly winds to predominate, bringing with them warmer weather and cloudy skies, often with drizzling rain.[7] Northerly winds at this time of year are cool, especially in the early part of the summer. During winter, cold northwesterly winds are frequent, accompanied by low temperatures, clear weather, and a very dry atmosphere. Winds from other quarters are apt to bring stormy weather and a rise in temperature and humidity. Strong winds are frequent during January and February. The Mistassini fear these winds, which are generally accompanied by low temperatures; at such times a person outdoors is in great danger of freezing.

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[1] Low, Report, p. 29L.

[2] Godfrey, Birds of Lake Mistassini, p. 9.

[3] Forest fires are not a recent phenomenon. Fathers Drueilletes and Dablon at Necouba in 1661 reported that forest fires "are very common here for a month or two in the summer . . ." (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 46, p. 279). In the Tadoussac area, Father de Crepieul in 1674 wrote "There may also be seen the recent traces which cruel fires have left in these vast forests. The Savages say that they have spread over more than two hundred leagues" (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 59, p. 31).

[4] Hare, Present-day Snowfall; Fig. 2, p. 657.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 659; Fig. 3, p. 658.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 660.

[7] Ekblaw, Ungava, p. 105.

Flora

The entire area is covered with forest, except the higher elevations such as the Otish Mountains. This forest is part of the extensive transcontinental boreal forest formation.[1] It is dominated by white spruce (*Picea glauca*), black spruce (*P. mariana*), larch (*Larix laricina*), balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*), and jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*).[2] Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) grows in the southern part of the area extending as far north as the southern tip of Lake Mistassini. The hardwoods—white birch (*Betula papyrifera*), balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*), aspen (*P. tremuloides*), willows (*Salix* spp.), and alders (*Alnus* spp.)—do not form a part of the climax but are important in serel stages.[3] At Mistassini, 80 per cent of the forest is black spruce.[4] The trees are small in diameter and rarely exceed fifty feet in height.

Numerous forest fires in historic times have nearly destroyed the original stands east of Lake Albanel as well as other sections of the country. In recent burns, blueberry bushes (*Vaccinium* spp.) are common, but sheep laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia*) and Labrador tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*) also occur. With time, poplar and birch form a subclimax with an understory of *Ledum, Kalmia,* and *Vaccinium.* Jack pine with a sparse understory of ericaceous plants and reindeer moss is found on the crests of the sandy ridges[5] and may represent a fire subclimax.[6]

Thick growths of willows, alders, and ericaceous shrubs are found along the banks of streams and lakes[7] where they form a transition to the forest. Sphagnum bogs are wooded with larch and stunted black spruce, as well as willow, alder, Labrador tea, and laurel. The ponds, being acidic, are largely devoid of vegetation.[8] The bottoms of the larger lakes are generally rocky; this, coupled with an excessive fluctuation in water-level, greatly inhibits the growth of aquatic plants.[9]

Distinct differences exist between the forest in southern Mistassini territory and that in the north, but as yet the boreal forest formation has not been subdivided into associations by botanists. Hare has proposed several structural types in lieu of this. Many are definitely not climax and probably represent successional stages. The first of these is the "close-forest" type consisting usually of black spruce – balsam fir, many mosses, and some characteristic herbs. Another is the "lichen-woodland" type composed predominantly of open stands of black and white spruce but also occasionally larch and jack pine, and with a thin flooring of lichens (*Cladonia* spp.). The trees are two to twenty-five yards apart.

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[1] Weaver and Clements, Plant Ecology, p. 487-92; Hare, Climatic and Zonal Divisions, p. 616.

[2] Hare, Climatic and Zonal Divisions, p. 616.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 617.

[4] Cameron and Morris, Mammals, p. 121.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Ekblaw, Ungava, p. 106.

[7] Hare, Climatic and Zonal Divisions, p. 618.

[8] Cameron and Morris, Mammals, p. 121-2.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

A "muskeg" type occurs on badly drained ground. Here black spruce and to a lesser extent larch are the typical trees along with sphagnum moss and certain shrubs.[1]

The "lichen-woodland" type is the conspicuous form in the Open Boreal Forest[2] found primarily in the north and west of the Mistassini area.[3] The "close-forest" type making up the Main Boreal Forest[4] is found in the south and east within the basin of Lakes Mistassini and Albanel[5] but probably extends farther west than indicated by Hare.

Berry bushes are found throughout the area, but only the blueberry occurs in any quantity. Others are mountain ash (*Pyrus* sp.), bird cherry (*Prunus pennsylvanica*), and raspberry (*Rubus* sp.).

Fauna

The mammalian fauna of Mistassini is restricted both in species and numbers.[6] Caribou (*Rangifer caribou*) are scarce,[7] occurring at present north and east of Lake Mistassini,[8] primarily about the Otish Mountains. Moose (*Alces americana*), recent migrants into the area,[9] are most numerous in the southern part.[10] Bear (*Euarctos americanus*) are not uncommon and are seen most frequently in the autumn in blueberry patches.[11] Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) are rather scarce in spite of the abundance of poplar and willow along the waterways. This is apparently due to excessive trapping. The greatest numbers are found now in the western part of the area. Otter (*Lutra canadensis*) are not uncommon and exhibit no appreciable fluctuations in numbers.[12] Mink (*Mustela vison*) are relatively common, varying somewhat from section to section. Marten (*Martes americana*) are very scarce, perhaps owing to destruction of the mature woods by fire. Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethica*) are relatively scarce. This is probably due to the sparse vegetation in the rocky, acid lakes and to over-trapping.[13] Hares (*Lepus americana*) vary in numbers from section to section; in addition there are drastic changes over time. Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*) are very scarce but are said to be more common to the north of Lake Mistassini.[14] Common to the area are fisher (*Martes*

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[1] Hare, Climatic and Zonal Divisions, p. 618, 622.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 624.

[3] *Ibid.*, Fig. 4, p. 617.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 624, 625.

[5] *Ibid.*, Fig. 4, p. 617.

[6] Cameron and Morris, Mammals, p. 122.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

[8] Cameron, A Guide to E. Can. Mammals, p. 60.

[9] Cameron and Morris, Mammals, p. 123.

[10] According to Rousseau, a chief food of the moose is the water lily, whose northern limit is at Mistassini. And reindeer moss, upon which caribou subsist, is far from common. For these reasons, Mistassini is almost outside the main range of both moose and caribou (Rousseau, Mistassini Calendar, p. 26).

[11] Cameron and Morris, Mammals, p. 123, 124, 128.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 123-5.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 122, 128.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

pennanti), weasel (*Mustela erminea*), fox (*Vulpes fulva* and *V. lagopus*), lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), wolf (*Canis lupus*), wolverine (*Gulo luscus*), skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), woodchuck (*Marmota monax*), red squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*), mole (*Condylura cristata*), shrew (*Sorex* sp.), and mice (*Napaezapus* sp., *Zapus* sp., *Clethrionomys* sp., *Synaptomys* sp., and *Peromyscus* sp.). These species are not considered further, for they are either too few in number or of too little concern to the Mistassini to affect their livelihood.

The bird population varies with the seasons. In winter there are Canada Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*), Spruce Grouse (*Canachites canadensis*), Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*), Chickadee (*Parus hudsonicus*), Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*), and White-winged Crossbill (*Loxia leucoptera*) as permanent residents. In no case are they numerous, with the possible exception of Spruce Grouse. These permanent residents are augmented by others from the north, including Willow and Rock Ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus* and *L. rupestris*) and Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*). As a rule the Rock Ptarmigan enters only the northern half of the Mistassini area while the Willow Ptarmigan is found throughout.

During the summer, a number of birds nest within the area. These include Common Loon (*Gavia immer*), Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*), American Goldeneye (*Glaucionetta clangula*), American Merganser (*Mergus merganser*), Red-breasted Merganser (*M. serrator*), Osprey (*Panion haliaetus*), Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*), Greater Yellow-legs (*Totanus melanoleucus*), Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*), Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*), Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*), Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), and a number of song birds.

In the spring and autumn, great numbers of waterfowl pass through the area migrating from or to their nesting grounds in the north. These include the Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*), Snow Goose (*Chen hyperborea*), Brant (*Branta bernicula*), Green-winged Teal (*Nettion carolinense*), Old-Squaw (*Clangula hyemalis*), White-winged Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*), Surf Scoter (*M. perspicillata*), American Scoter (*Oidemia nigra*), and Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*).[1] These transient visitants begin to arrive during September, and by the end of October or early November they have all left the area. They return as early as the middle of April, with the Black Duck, Mergansers, and Goldeneye the first to arrive. By May, the others make their appearance.

Fish are fairly common and include lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*), speckled trout (*S. fontinalis*), whitefish (*Coregonus* sp.), pike (*Esox* sp.), dore (*Stizostedion vitreum*), common sucker and red sucker (*Catostomus* spp.), burbot (*Lota lota*), and sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*). They vary in numbers and species from one body of water to another. In addition, there is the seasonal movement of fish to and from their spawning grounds. During the winter months, fish, according to informants, have a tendency to move into deeper water.

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[1] Personal observations: Godfrey, Birds of Lake Mistassini; Taverner, Birds of Canada.

Sturgeon are confined to the southwestern edge of the area. Dore are not found in the northern part of the region and may be absent from the headwaters of the Eastmain River. Other species are found throughout the area; suckers are the commonest.

The most conspicuous invertebrates are *diptera*—moose flies, deer flies, black flies, sand flies, and mosquitoes. The black flies are perhaps the most numerous. These species begin to emerge as early as the latter part of May and remain until September. They reach their peak in early summer. The haemophagous habits of these species cause the Indians some discomfort. Also present are head lice and fish tapeworm. There are many other invertebrates, but their interactions with man are limited.

Chapter II

HISTORICAL SKETCH

With the advent of Europeans in Eastern Canada in the sixteenth century, the Indians were subjected to the forces of an alien culture. The fur trade quickly became of major concern to the French. Trading posts were established, and traders were sent among the native inhabitants. Later the English competed with the French in the fur trade, and in 1763 they took possession of all of Canada. Missionaries soon followed, or in some cases preceded the traders into the interior, where they laboured among the inhabitants for many years. In time their numbers diminished, but many of the ideas they had introduced remained. The traders and missionaries offered the Indians much that was novel to their way of life. Perhaps most important in the eyes of the natives were the new tools, clothing, and food, which they could buy in exchange for furs. At first, these material goods were of limited quantity. Food supplies did not become very important for many Indians until late in the 1800's, but steel tools soon replaced those of bone and stone, and western clothing that of skins.

An attempt is made in this section to trace the contact between the Europeans and native inhabitants of southern Quebec, especially the Mistassini Indians, from 1600 until 1955. In order to do this, several time periods have been designated for convenience of presentation and because in a sense these periods form logical units: 1600–1670, 1670–1800, 1800–1900, 1900–1955.

1600–1670

During the latter part of the sixteenth century, the fur trade brought Europeans into intermittent contact with the Indians of Canada. A more permanent basis for this contact was established when Tadoussac, the earliest trading post in Canada, was built at the mouth of the Saguenay River about 1600.[1] This post formed the southern gateway to the Mistassini territory.

Recollet missionaries soon followed the traders into the area and established missions.[2] The Recollets were replaced by the Jesuits, who had established the Mission of the Holy Cross at Tadoussac by about 1635.[3] Now began the slow push into the interior. In 1647 Lake St. John was discovered by Father DeQuen, and within a few years a fur trading post and mission were established at Metabechouan on the lake.[1] Not until 1661 did the French move beyond the confines of Lake St. John.[2] In that year, Fathers Gabriel Drueilletes and Claude Dablon reached Necouba, now Lake Ducharme, about half-way between Lake St. John and Lake Mistassini. They did not refer to the Mistassini by name but mentioned seeing Indians "from eight to ten nations . . . ."[3]

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[1] Wilson, Tadoussac, p. 8, 10.

[2] Le Clerq, Establishment of the Faith, p. 92-3.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 384.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the fur trade was already under way.[4] Because of the demands of the fur trade, the supply of beaver soon decreased.[5] In addition, other game became scarce and the inhabitants suffered from a lack of food.[6] Early in the century, with the shifting of the fur trade westward, the Montagnais were neglected.

Besides starvation, the Montagnais suffered from Iroquois raids, which achieved their greatest intensity between 1655 and 1665.[7] Although there is no evidence that the Mistassini were attacked by marauding groups, Iroquois war parties depopulated surrounding areas and disrupted the fur trade and missionary efforts. To this day, the Mistassini fear the Iroquois.

Between 1600 and 1670, the Mistassini came to the attention of the French, who made unsuccessful attempts to reach their territory. The first reference to the group by name was made in 1642–3.[8] During this period, the Mistassini were aware of an alien people to the south of them and may have seen a missionary or trader occasionally. Certainly trade goods had entered their area, for in 1672, Albanel met some Mistassini who were "adorned with all their costliest ornaments—such as high head-dresses and porcelain collars, belts, and bracelets."[9]

1670–1800

During this period, contact was first made with the Mistassini in their home territory, and trading posts were established. These posts, although temporary, indicated the increasing tempo of the fur trade. On the other hand, missionary efforts had ceased by the end of the period.

Tadoussac, at this time, was the headquarters for the huge trading district known as Traite de Tadoussac, the Domaine du Roi, or the King's Posts.[10] In 1670, with the formation[11] of the Hudson's Bay Company and the establishment of British trading posts on James Bay, the French renewed their efforts to reach the interior bands in order to prevent them from trading with the new company. Father Charles Albanel began a journey to the Bay in 1671, but snow and ice stopped him north of Lake St. John and forced him to camp there for the winter.[1] At his winter camp, he was visited by a few Mistassini. In June, Albanel left his winter quarters and a short time later encountered Mistassini, who tried to prevent him from proceeding further.[2] Finally, he received permission to continue and soon thereafter reached Lake Mistassini, the first white man to enter the area. He continued on to James Bay[3] and returned the same summer to Lake St. John. Here he learned that some Mistassini had been waiting a month for him.[4] In 1674, he again visited the Mistassini on his way to James Bay.[5]

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[1] Burgesse, Saguenay, p. 44-5.

[2] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 46, p. 259-61.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 281.

[4] Bailey, Social Revolution, p. 266; Le Clerq, Establishment of the Faith, p. 159.

[5] Bailey, Conflict of Cultures, p. 45.

[6] Le Clerq, Establishment of the Faith, p. 134.

[7] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 46, p. 287-9.

[8] *Ibid.*, Vol. 24, p. 155.

[9] *Ibid.*, Vol. 56, p. 173.

[10] Wilson, Tadoussac, p. 11.

[11] Schooling, The Hudson's Bay Company, p. 5.

From this time, contact with the Mistassini was more frequent, or, at least, was more often reported. During the winter of 1673–4, several Mistassini requested Father Crepieul to visit their "chief." After visiting him, the priest left with a number of Mistassini for Quebec to see Frontenac, in order to secure his protection against the Iroquois.[6]

By 1674–5, a mission had been established for those Mistassini who came south toward Lake St. John,[7] and in 1676 a post was established at Point Bleue, near the north end of Lake St. John.[8] Presumably, the Mistassini began trading here, although in 1678 they were said to have proceeded beyond this post to Chicoutimi to meet the priests.[9] In 1679, Louis Jolliet established the first trading post within the confines of the Mistassini territory.[10] This post continued in operation for only a few years, but soon after, in 1695, the Hudson's Bay Company built their inland post at Nemiscau, west of Mistassini. About 1700, the French were said to have built the King's Post of Mistassini, although it apparently did not remain in operation long.[11] At the same time, a missionary, Father J. B. Maurice, was sent to the Mistassini.[12]

During the eighteenth century, interest in the interior diminished as exploration and expansion increased westward. The King's Domain still existed, but for twenty years no missionary was in the area.[13] Father Pierre Laure began work in the district in 1720 and provided the first general description of the Mistassini.[14] About 1725, a new trading post was established among the Mistassini, but it was soon abandoned. In 1730, a portion of the Mistassini came to Lake St. John in the spring, while the remainder went to the English on James Bay to trade.[1] Apparently, the latter practice, having already become established, continued over the years into the twentieth century.

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[1] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 56, p. 151-61.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 169-71.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 179–207.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

[5] *Ibid.*, Vol. 73, p. 65–7.

[6] *Ibid.*, Vol. 59, p. 41–5.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 253.

[8] Burgesse, Saguenay, p. 44.

[9] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 61, p. 87.

[10] Burgesse, Jolliet, p. 12, 15.

[11] Anderson, The Rupert River, p. 13.

[12] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 68, p. 47; Vol. 69, p. 129.

[13] *Ibid.*, Vol. 68, p. 27.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 43-9.

Around the middle of the eighteenth century, there was still no permanent post in the Mistassini area, and Chicoutimi was one centre for the Mistassini trade during May, June, and July.[2]

In 1763, when all of Canada came permanently under British rule, the Hudson's Bay Company extended its trading posts into the interior. The post of Neoskweskau was built around 1787, and other posts were established at Mistassini and Waswanipi during the next twenty-five to fifty years.[3] A post may have been built at the outlet of Lake Mistassini as early as 1800.[4] Trade goods probably consisted mostly of tools and clothing, not food.

Besides the traders, foreign trappers now entered the life of the Mistassini. During the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Montagnais territory was used for trapping by other Algonkian peoples, and even by some Iroquois. Large numbers of "Abenaki" migrated to Sillery and Three Rivers[5] and were soon exploiting the surrounding areas.[6] Burgesse contends that traders of Three Rivers organized parties of "Micmac" and "Huron" hunters to poach on the lands of the Indians belonging to the King's Posts.[7] Just when these foreign trappers reached Mistassini territory is not known, but by the early 1800's they were exploiting the southern part of the area.[8]

By 1730 the fur supply was sadly depleted. Father Laure complained that the lands of Chicoutimi and surrounding areas were ruined.[9] Burgesse remarked that the inefficient management of the King's Posts and the unscrupulous traders from Three Rivers had denuded the country of game and furbearers. The inland posts were closed and not re-opened until English control was established.[10] The Mistassini, although more isolated than the St. Lawrence bands, must have been influenced to some extent by foreign Indian trappers and dwindling game supplies.

Even before 1700, the population along the St. Lawrence appears to have been greatly reduced through disease, famine, and drink[11] despite the exaggerated figures provided by the Jesuits[12] Father Laure in 1730 wrote that the Mistassini were reduced to a small number of people.[13]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. 69, p. 113.

[3] Anderson, The Rupert River, p. 13.

[4] *Idem*, Fur Trader's Story, p. 78.

[5] Bailey, Conflict of Cultures, p. 30-1.

[6] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 68, p. 107.

[7] Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 14.

[8] Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 433, 404.

[9] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 68, p. 109.

[10] Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 4.

[11] Bailey, Conflict of Cultures, p. 74.

[12] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 68, p. 45, 79; Vol. 69, p. 113.

[13] *Ibid.*, Vol. 68, p. 45.

1800–1900

During the nineteenth century, the Hudson's Bay Company's position was consolidated within Mistassini territory, and a more efficient transportation system was developed for supplying the wants of the inhabitants.

At the beginning of the 1800's, Lake Mistassini was considered both as part of the King's Domain and as within the province of the Hudson's Bay Company territory. The Hudson's Bay Company had an establishment at Birch Post (Neoskweskau),[1] but it was closed by 1823.[2] The Northwest Company rented the King's Posts in 1802 and built a post at the southern end of Lake Mistassini. Their lease lasted until 1812,[3] after which the Company was no longer interested in the area.

The precise date when the first Hudson's Bay Company post was built on Lake Mistassini is not known, but it was probably between 1808 and 1820,[4] although in 1890 Low reported that the Company had had a post on the Lake for nearly 100 years,[5] and Anderson stated that a post was reportedly established about 1800.[6] It was first located at the discharge of Lake Mistassini[7] but in 1835 was moved to its present location at the south end of the lake.[8]

After the demise of the Northwest Company, the Hudson's Bay Company was the undisputed master of the area. Supplies were brought from Rupert's House by way of the Rupert and Marten rivers. Mistassini were employed to man the canoes, and a Mistassini was usually placed in charge of the actual operations of the trip to and from the Bay.[9] This system of freighting supplies was known as the "fur brigade." The brigade left at the beginning of summer, carrying the winter's catch of furs to the Bay, and returned late in the summer with the supplies for the post.[10] The quantity of goods that could be transported to the interior remained limited, although more food was being brought into the country by the end of the century.

During the first part of the century, the population of the Mistassini band appears to have reached a very low level (*see* Table I), with famine and disease being the major causes of the decline. Small-pox in 1802 and measles in 1810 caused havoc among the Montagnais.[11] The population increased during the latter part of the century and appears to have regained its former state.

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[1] Davidson, Northwest Company, p. 78; McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 446.

[2] Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 455.

[3] Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 77.

[4] McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 446–7; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 453.

[5] Low, Mistassini Region, p. 13.

[6] Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 78.

[7] Masson, Bourgoise, map at end of Vol. I.

[8] Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 78.

[9] Nanuwan, S. Voyageur, p. 102–3.

[10] Low, Mistassini Region, p 5; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 441.

[11] McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 426.

1900–1955

During the last fifty-five years, tremendous changes have occurred in the Mistassini area. In this period the territory was effectively put in touch with the outside world.

Mistassini continued to be provisioned from Rupert's House by means of the fur brigade until 1926, when the post was transferred from the James Bay District to the Lake St. John District, and the supply routes changed accordingly.[1] Starting about 1928, supplies were brought from the town of Oskelaneo, located to the south of Lake Mistassini on the Canadian National Railroad.[2] This reduced the distance goods had to be transported by about 150 miles. The fur brigade system was still employed, but the Tête de Boule of the Obijuan band carried the goods half-way inland to Lynx-eye Lake, where the Mistassini brigade received them and took them to their post.[3] Most bulky goods were transported in this manner until a few years ago,[4] though some goods were flown directly from Oskelaneo, Senneterre, and Lake St. John.[5]

During the 1930's, considerable prospecting took place about Lake Chibougamau, south of Lake Mistassini, and interest in the area increased steadily.[6] The post of Chibougamau was established about this time but abandoned in the early forties. Chibougamau became the nucleus of a tiny settlement of white prospectors, which continues to grow. In 1949, the Quebec Department of Mines built a road from Lake St. John to the Chibougamau area,[7] and the mining industry and Euro-American occupancy of the country expanded rapidly.

The Hudson's Bay Company now supplied the Mistassini Post with an abundance of goods, transported by road and then flown in.

During the past ten to fifteen years, some of the southern families of the Mistassini have been brought into close contact with the whites. These Indians, having abandoned hunting and trapping almost entirely, now depend on the generosity of the prospectors and infrequent employment.[8]

As indicated in the preceding historical sketch, the Mistassini have remained relatively isolated until the last twenty-five to fifty years. Throughout their history of contact with the whites, they have continued to hunt and trap but at the same time have become closely bound to the Western economy, exchanging furs for food and other material goods. During the greater part of this period, the goods they received were predominantly tools and clothing. As late as the 1913–18 period, they needed little store food, and a family might procure only 50 pounds of flour for the winter.[9]

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[1] Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 99.

[2] *Idem*, The Rupert River, p. 13.

[3] Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 397.

[4] Rousseau, Mistassini Calendar, p. 35.

[5] Neilson, Mistassini Territory, p. 149.

[6] Hare, The Labrador Frontier, p. 421.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] This refers in particular to the Chibougamau band. *See* the next section, where group names are discussed.

[9] Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 106.

Not until recently have they secured large quantities of food through trade and government allotments. Nevertheless, they still depend to a large extent upon their environment for sustenance, as western foods are not secured in sufficient quantities to last through the winter. Informants remembered that as recently as 1920–5, supplies of western food obtained in August were exhausted by Christmas. Today, flour and other staples may be depleted by early spring, and then the families must live upon the country or hurry to the post. The cost of goods and the difficulties of transporting large quantities into the interior prohibit many families from adequately providing for the winter months.

Chapter III

SOCIAL FEATURES

Introduction

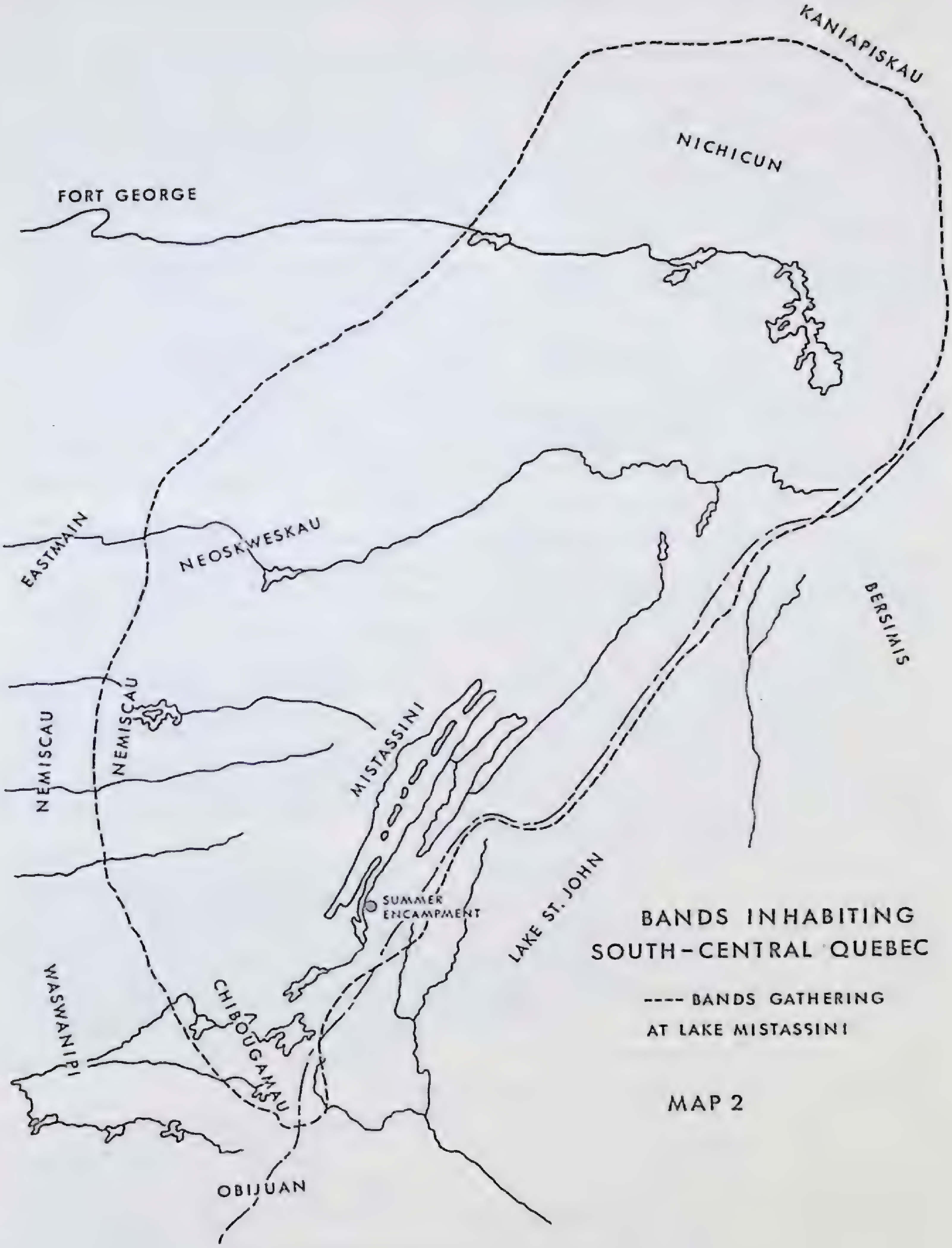
The Mistassini do not possess a very elaborate or complex social structure. It is a structure, however, that over the years has undergone certain changes which are still continuing. In order to fully appreciate the position of the hunting group and its operation within the society, a brief description is necessary of two other features of the social structure—the band and the nuclear family. The social structure of the Mistassini and other groups within the eastern subarctic cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of the population densities existing both at present and in the past. Accordingly, such figures as are available are given first in this section. Population densities are, of course, dependent upon the subsistence pattern, the land productivity, and the general technology.

Population

During the summers of 1953 and 1954, over six hundred Indians gathered at trading posts at the southern end of Lake Mistassini. These belong to five named groups—Mistassini (mIstAsIniy), Nichicun (nIcIkUn), Neoskweskau (newUskweskaw), Chibougamau (UcepAkUmu), and Nemiscau (nemIskaw) (*see* Map 2). Only a few families of the latter group visit Lake Mistassini; their kinsmen are located at Lake Nemiscau. The history of the Neoskweskau and Chibougamau bands is intimately bound up with that of the Mistassini.

Before it is possible to give any population figures, some standard territorial and/or political unit should be selected. This, unfortunately, is practically impossible since territorial boundaries have shifted with the altering definitions of exactly who constituted the Mistassini Indians. For over three hundred years, the Indians about lakes Mistassini and Albanel have been referred to as Mistassini. The term has been used loosely, sometimes with respect to the inhabitants of a limited area and at other times encompassing more people and territory. Accordingly, population figures for different periods are seldom comparable.

During the 1600's and 1700's, the Jesuits mentioned the Mistassini but did not specify their numbers or boundaries. In 1820, the Indians extending northwest of Lake Mistassini were called Neoskweskau, and those southwest of the lake, the Rush Lake Indians. Trading posts were situated in both these areas. By 1823 the Rush Lake Post was closed; many of these Indians who began to trade at Mistassini were then termed



BANDS INHABITING SOUTH-CENTRAL QUEBEC

MAP 2

Mistassini Indians.[1] The Neoskweskau Indians likewise were listed as Mistassini after the Neoskweskau Post was closed at about the same time.[2]

Between 1825 and 1835, the "Timmiskimay" Post was established to the northeast of Lake Mistassini. The Indians in this area became known as the "Timmiskimay" Indians.[3] In 1953–4 informants said that the Temiscamie Indians had become part of the Mistassini. This amalgamation must have occurred before the early 1900's, as the Temiscamie Indians were not mentioned by Speck.[4] Later, the northern section of Speck's Mistassini again became known as the Neoskweskau Indians, which name they retain to this day. In recent years the southern families of Speck's Mistassini which gathered about a new trading post at Lake Chibougamau were recognized as a distinct group and named after the post.[5] When this post closed, many "chibougamau" returned to Mistassini to trade. In 1954 they were still referred to by the Mistassini as *UcepAkUmu inIw,* but at least one member of this group declared he was a Mistassini Indian. All five groups are now beginning to lose their distinctiveness. One informant even claimed that they should all be considered *mIstAsIniy inIw* because they gathered and traded at the same place.

Table I presents the population data available for the Mistassini during the past 270 years. The figures for 1829, 1914, and 1952 are comparable, but this is not true for those of other years because of the unknown size of territory inhabited. In 1914 Speck mapped a territory for the Mistassini and listed the number of individuals inhabiting this area.[6] From the data presented by Lips[7] it can be calculated how many people in 1829 inhabited approximately the same area as mapped by Speck in 1914. The same calculations can be made for 1952. Presumably the population listed by Speck in 1924 inhabited the same territory as Speck's "Mistassini" in 1914. There is no way of determining the size of the territory represented by the other figures.

Based upon the total population of all five groups,[8] the population density at present is one person to approximately 66 square miles. Native resources alone are not adequate to support this population. If the Mistassini were to be self-sufficient today, a density of one person for every 100 square miles would be necessary. In 1829, the density was perhaps one person to 200 square miles. This extreme paucity of people probably resulted from disease and starvation on account of the depletion of resources during the preceding hundred years.

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[1] Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 454.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 455.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 418.

[4] Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 452-71.

[5] Chibougamau Indians were mentioned in 1928 by Cooper, Some Notes on Waswanipi, p. 459.

[6] Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, Plate II.

[7] Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 458-9.

[8] Through the kindness of Mr. Wilfrid Jefferys, who supplied the population figures.

TABLE 1. *Population of the Mistassini*

Date	Details of Population	Source
1672	150 (p. 207), 200 (?) (p. 209) *total* 300 to 500 (?) individuals	*Jesuit Relations*, Vol. 56
1730	reduced to small number of people	*Ibid.*, Vol. 68, p. 45
1823	151 individuals 29 families 34 men	Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 454
1829	50 individuals[1] (approx.) 9 families (approx.) 14 men	*Ibid.*, p. 458–9
1857	200 individuals	*Ibid.*, p. 398, Speck, Montagnais-Naskapi Bands, p. 597–8
1885	150 individuals	Low, Mistassini Region, p. 24
1910	160 individuals 30 families	Bruet, Le Labrador, p. 234
1914	187 individuals	Speck, The Social Structure, p. 90,
	31 families 60 men	Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 454
1913–18	250 individuals (approx.)	Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 91
1924	159 individuals	Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 389
	159 plus 140 Neoskweskau *total* 299 individuals	Speck, Montagnais-Naskapi Bands, p. 598
1929	281 individuals	Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 389
1952	450 individuals (approx.) 112 men (approx.)	

[1] This does not take in those individuals in the northeast section of the territory and trading at "Timmiskimay" Post, who may have numbered 25 persons and perhaps some individuals in the southern part of the territory who went south to trade at Ashuapmuchuan or Lake St. John.

For the past fifty years, the population has been increasing rapidly. During 1952–3, there were 33 births and only nine deaths. The expanding population probably reflects the following influences: 1) an assured food supply provided by the government, and/or 2), increased efficiency in the exploitation of the natural resources, and/or 3), higher prices for furs. It is not due to medical aid, which is minimal and only available during the summer months.

The Band

The problem of band definition is obscured for several reasons. The published sources are contradictory and not altogether clear as to the meaning of the term. In addition, there have been changes during the past 300 years in the organization of those groupings which have been termed "bands." The data presented in the preceding section suggest that a group with continuity of relatively stable membership for any great length of time was never known as Mistassini to the traders or missionaries. Trading posts, instead, tended to delimit the groups[1] and gave the basis at times for group names. In fact, one informant clearly stated that the groups were named after the post where they traded. Nevertheless, this does not mean that before the advent of trading companies there were no summer gatherings of approximately the same hunting groups year after year, and that these summer groups did not have names for themselves. The Mistassini Report for 1829–30 stated that Meewoppaish was the "principal" Indian of a small party of hunters who assembled a short distance to the east of Little Mistassinny (i.e., Lake Albanel) almost every summer and sometimes in winter.[2] There was no trading post there. Trading posts merely established new foci for groupings and attracted larger numbers.

A band, as the term is employed in this paper, is composed of two or more hunting groups habitually gathering each summer at a trading post or at a good fishing site and recognizing a common name for themselves. The band only functioned seasonally, during the few weeks of summer. The five groups at Lake Mistassini (Nichicun, Neoskweskau, Nemiskau, Chibougamau, and Mistassini) are considered bands although, as noted previously, they may be in a state of fusion.

From available field evidence, the present-day Mistassini band does not, at any time, form a recognizable unit for political, religious, or economic activities. There is a strong tendency for the Mistassini to settle within one particular section of the summer encampment, but band co-operation and undertakings are practically, if not completely, non-existent. Missionaries and traders alike despair of attempting to persuade the Indians to take collective action. Only on such occasions as dances, marriage feasts, and church services do all the Indians comprising the five bands at Mistassini unite.

The five bands at Mistassini form a political unit, "directed" by a chief, who is assisted by three councillors. The positions of chief and councillor are attained by "free" elections.[3] In the past, only men voted, but since a woman is now the British queen, some Mistassini feel that women should also vote. Generally, middle-aged men are selected for these offices, as young men are considered too immature.[1]

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[1] Cf. Burgesse, Montagnais-Naskapi Nomenclature, p. 45; Garigue, The Social Organization, p. 110.

[2] Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 461.

[3] According to Lips, Mistassini chieftainship was originally hereditary, with the eldest son succeeding; if there was no son, the chief's oldest surviving brother succeeded, and if the heir was not thought qualified or if there was no male heir, a new chief was elected, although not always immediately (*Ibid.*, p. 400–1). Anderson reports that in 1913–18 Solomon Voyageur was chief through force of character, although Solomon's father-in-law was the hereditary chief (Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 123).

The chief and councillors have little real authority.[2] The formal political posts of chief and councillors are not indigenous but reflect white contact and Canadian government influence.[3] This is suggested by the fact that these officials are primarily intermediaries between government officials and band members.[4] There is no indication that the Mistassini band had a leader other than the elected officials.[5]

Historical documents fail to substantiate the occurrence of chiefs in any formal sense in early days. Bands were smaller and may have constituted *ad hoc* political units,[6] headed by prominent men, often referred to in the early literature as "chiefs," "Captains," or "principal men." These headmen had little power outside their own extended families.[7] The position was achieved on the basis of qualities of age and wisdom.

The band was not, nor is it today, the land-owning unit. This was the prerogative of the hunting group or nuclear family. The hunting lands of all individuals who considered themselves Mistassini formed a continuous block of territory which can be said to represent the territorial extent of the band. The territorial limits were not stable, as a family on the border might join a neighbouring band and become identified with it.[8]

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[1] Lips said that the qualifications for chieftainship emphasized high ethical standards, consciousness of community responsibility, and, above all else, hunting ability. If a leader failed to meet these requirements, perhaps because of advanced years, he was no longer looked upon as chief. (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 401). The possession of spiritual power did not entitle a man to chieftaincy (*Ibid.*, p. 486). Female chiefs were unknown (Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 9). The oldest man of several equal choices was selected. Competition for the position occurred only rarely because competitive actions were disliked (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 401).

[2] Cf. Burgesse, Tribal Laws, p. 18; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 401. Their position is merely advisory and sometimes admonitory, with little to do either at present or formerly (Burgesse, Tribal Laws, p. 18; Rousseau, *Chez le Chef*, p. 33). On the other hand, Solomon Voyageur, chief of the Mistassini band around the turn of the century, was apparently a forceful person who wielded considerable power (Nanuwan, S. Voyageur, p. 162–3).

[3] Cf. Cooper, Notes on the Ethnology, p. 20. Lips takes a contrary view, maintaining that the position of chieftain has undergone but small change since contact (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 399, 400).

[4] According to Lips, a chief was expected to maintain peace, represent the interests of the band in dealings with outsiders, cope with violations of hunting rights within the band (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 402), redistribute land belonging to a family now deceased (*Ibid.*, p. 403; Rousseau, *Chez le Chef*, p. 33), intervene in domestic affairs (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 403), aid those in need (*Ibid.*, p. 404), force an individual to sell his furs to the Hudson's Bay Company to clear the latter's debt (*Ibid.*, p. 401) and to lead his people in war against the enemy (*Ibid.*, p. 404). The chief passed sentence in private except for major offences when he depended upon the verdict of the entire council of the band (Ibid., p. 403–4). This characterization of the chief's duties applies primarily to the latter part of the last century and not, as Lips contends, to an earlier period, for which there is no adequate documentation for this point of view.

[5] There is no evidence for an over-leader of the people who have been called "Mistassini" in the past. Instead, several males were simultaneously referred to as "chiefs." In 1671–2, Albanel spoke of numerous "chiefs" (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 56, p. 215). Crepieul in 1673–74 gave a similar impression (*Ibid.*, Vol. 59, p. 43). These "chiefs" were possibly hunting group leaders or quasi-headmen of several combined hunting groups such as that reported for Meewoppaish above.

[6] Lips contended that the band always was the largest political unit (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 398–400).

[7] In 1634, LeJeune said regarding the power of "chiefs": "All the authority of their chief is in his tongue's end; for he is powerful in so far as he is eloquent . . . he will not be obeyed unless he pleased the Savages" (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 6, p. 243).

[8] Cf. Davidson, Hunting Territories of Grand Lake Victoria, p. 80; Cooper: Is the Algonquin Family, p. 71. Lips, on the other hand, contended that the territory of the band was rather well defined (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 398), as does Garigue (Garigue, The Social Organization, p. 110–11).

There is no concrete evidence that the band as a unit ever entered into any disputes regarding the boundaries of individual hunting group territories. The hunting groups involved appear to have been the ones who arranged a settlement.[1]

The composition of the band was fluid[2] and probably still would be today except for Hudson's Bay Company policies and government restrictions. At the present time, the families who gather at Mistassini form a permanent unit. This has resulted from the government's requiring each family to return to the same post, year after year, for its family allowance and other forms of aid. Only with the permission of the Indian agent can a family move to a new locality.

Formerly, and to a certain extent today, an individual sometimes changed the location where he habitually spent the winter. The new location might be so situated that the individual found it more convenient to associate during the summer with a different band. In this case he would, as a rule, become a member of the other band, since it was the summer gathering that determined band affiliation. Changes of this nature were brought about in the majority of cases through marriage. A man joined his father-in-law's group; a woman joined her husband's group; a man married a widow and settled on her land; or a man went with his father's brother to the latter's land.[3] Several families now gathering at Mistassini came from the Lake St. John band. Coom Etienne, now dead, is an example. He immigrated about fifty or sixty years ago and married the daughter of Sandy Shecapio, a Mistassini. Etienne's descendants are now firmly established in the heart of the area exploited by Mistassini families and are considered Mistassini Indians.

An individual's or family's winter residence might not be changed, but his summer residence might be moved, bringing him eventually into a new band.[4]

In summary, there were formerly social units larger than the hunting group among the west-central Montagnais-Naskapi, which may be termed bands. These were of an amorphous nature. The band can be thought of as the largest grouping that normally assembled, usually during the summer at some particular body of water with good fishing resources, but sometimes in winter. It comprised several hunting groups, probably never exceeding fifty individuals, and recognized the most respected male member as "leader." It numbered among its members one or more shamans. The band was closely bound together by blood relationships and marriage bonds. The group habitually inhabited the same general area. In such activities as politics, religion, and economics, there was limited or no co-operation. Membership was fluid, and territorial limits shifted. These bands were not isolated groups but were closely linked with surrounding groups by means of kinship ties and a common cultural tradition.

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[1] Lips, on the other hand, stated that a dispute over a boundary with another band was settled by the chief, not the families involved (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 428). Furthermore, bands respected each other's borders, although it was permissible to pass through the territory of a foreign band (*Ibid.*, p. 398).

[2] Cf. Rousseau. *Chez le Chef*, p. 35.

[3] Several cases occurred in the 1820–40 period at Mistassini. A Rupert's House woman married a Mistassini man, Missenhahargonish, and resided with him (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 462, 463). Later Potish, a Rupert's House man, married Missenhahargonish's widow and at the time the report was written, they considered him a Mistassini (*Ibid.*, p. 467). He apparently took over her deceased husband's land. Finally, Neippesheish, listed as a Mistassini, but the son of a Waswanipi man, hunted with his uncle, Sakyo, a Mistassini (*Ibid.*, p. 457, 458–9).

[4] Cf. Garigue, The Social Organization, p. 111. In the Hudson's Bay Company Report for Mistassini between 1820-40, cases are cited in which the Company allowed an individual to change his trading post (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 459, 461, 464). This did not necessarily mean that the individual changed his winter residence, but it does suggest that his band membership would in time be altered.

With contact, certain features of the band and its operations changed. The band began to assemble at a trading post and no longer assembled in winter[1]; it increased in size, contained fewer shamans, and developed stable membership and boundaries. In modern times, a chief and council system developed or was imposed from outside to deal with problems raised by these larger gatherings clustered about the trading post, and to represent the band when dealing with the government. There is some tendency at present for the band members to look upon the summer encampment as their "home," occasionally living there at times of the year other than summer and constructing a few permanent residences in the form of log cabins.

Nuclear Family

Each band comprises several hunting groups, which will be discussed later in this paper. Each hunting group is, in turn, composed of several nuclear families.

To establish a family was and is the goal of all Mistassini. Marriage ordinarily was monogamous,[2] although polygamy was permitted and practised to a limited extent. Few had as many as three wives.[3] Today the Mistassini are strictly monogamous.

Males usually marry in their early twenties, formerly perhaps somewhat earlier. As a rule, young men marry women of approximately the same age,[4] but older men frequently marry young women. Girls usually marry during the latter half of their teens. In 1953–4, there was only one spinster over thirty, a woman who was a hunchback. Formerly, girls married early in life, occasionally even before puberty. Most individuals marry at least twice during their lifetime, not because of divorce but owing to the death of a spouse. For example, of ninety-two married Mistassini males each had had an average of 1.3 wives. This figure is low, as many of these were young men.

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[1] This was true in the recent past, but with continually changing economic conditions there is a tendency for some families to assemble at the village during a part of the winter at least.

[2] Cf. Flannery, Position of Women, p. 84; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 419.

[3] In 1672, Albanel wrote, "Polygamy is not common among these people" (i.e. the Montagnais, including the Mistassini) (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 56, p. 217). The Mistassini Report for 1823 listed five of twenty-nine married men as having two wives each, while the remainder had one (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 454); in the James Bay area, two or three sisters sometimes shared a husband (Flannery, Position of Women, p. 84).

[4] Cf. Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 422, who also added that occasionally a young man married a widow twenty years or more older because she had a good hunting ground.

The choice of a mate was conditioned by practical considerations, kinship, and geography. The proficiency of a prospective spouse in everyday tasks was an important factor. Bilateral cross-cousin marriage was and still is practised.[1] Although the evidence is not conclusive, this may have been the preferred type of marriage.[2] Formerly, the sororate was permitted, or perhaps required.[3] Marriage exchanges, involving two brothers and two sisters, or brother-sister exchange, are common. The former type is more frequent.

There is a slight tendency for marriages to occur most frequently between families whose hunting territories are in close proximity to each other. Nevertheless, the band was neither exogamous nor endogamous. Marriages occurred with individuals as far away as Lake St. John and Rupert's House. Slightly more than 20 per cent of ninety-six marriages recorded (taking Mistassini, Chibougamau, and Neoskweskau as a unit), where the origin of the wife was known, involved surrounding groups. Over half of these were contracted with women living to the west at Nemiscau or James Bay,[4] four were with Waswanipi women, three with Nichicun, and one with a Lake St. John woman. About 18 per cent of the women of the Mistassini-Chibougamau-Neoskweskau group married men from bands other than these. Nearly half were with Lake St. John men, four with James Bay, and three with Waswanipi men.[5] This intermarriage, especially with James Bay people, may be the result of the employment of Mistassini on the fur brigades which travelled to Rupert's House each summer until the 1920's. In the past fifty years, outside marriages appear to have been decreasing in frequency.

Marriages are usually arranged by the parents of the young couple[6] or, if the parents are deceased, by other older relatives. Usually the boy's parents ask the girl's; rarely do the parents of the girl initiate the contract.[7]

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[1] Cf. Speck, Mistassini Notes, p. 42.

[2] Cf. Flannery, Cross-Cousin Marriage, p. 31. Dunning views bilateral cross-cousin marriage as a "convenience" due, in part, to the sparse population and kinship system (Dunning, Social and Economic Change, p. 152).

[3] The levirate was permissible formerly, the younger brother often marrying the widow (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 427); in 1672 Albanel reported what is apparently the same custom: "I even remarked that the second wife of those who had two was nearly always some near relative; and upon inquiring the reason that could underlie such a custom, I was answered that when a woman lost her husband, it was the nearest relative's duty to take care of her and maintain her—holding her not as a slave but as a wife" (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 56, p. 215–17). Other types of unions recorded include step-daughter marriage for the Montagnais (McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 419) and uncle-niece marriage for the Mistassini (Speck, Mistassini Notes, p. 422).

[4] Cf. Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 115.

[5] In the 1820's and '30's, a somewhat similar situation seems to have prevailed (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 417).

[6] Cf. Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 3.

[7] The girl's parents did not attempt to arrange a marriage unless they felt quite certain that the proposed son-in-law would be acceptable to their daughter (*Ibid.*).

A boy generally expresses his preference to his father, who, if his wife also approves, broaches the subject to the girl's parents.[1]

Occasionally, one of the parents might interfere with a marriage desired by the young couple on the grounds that one of them was lazy or otherwise unsuitable.[2] If the boy's parents arranged a marriage that he did not approve of, he might refuse to marry the chosen girl. The matter was then dropped. A girl who found the marriage highly distasteful might refuse to comply.[3]

A widower usually requested the girl's parents' permission. An exception occurred during the summer of 1954 when a widower asked the chief to negotiate a marriage for him with a thirty-nine-year-old widow. The chief approached the woman directly, although her parents were still living.

Informants denied the existence of a marriage ceremony or feast in the period before church weddings.[4] Today all marriages take place during the summer, two to four couples usually being married at the same time by the native deacon or visiting minister.

No preparations, such as making clothing or preparing food for the feast, are made until the day of the wedding. If these were done prior to that time, it is believed the marriage might not take place or some other bad luck might occur.[5] The marriage ceremony is always followed by a feast and ordinarily by a dance, where the newlyweds dance first.

The couple usually spends the first night or two after marriage in the lodge of the boy's parents. After this, they erect their own home wherever they wish, though ordinarily near that of the boy's parents. Because of this, the men of a patrilineal line tend to live in close proximity to one another at the summer encampment. Altering this arrangement is the fact that members of a hunting group, which may not be a patrilocal extended family, also tend to settle near one another during the summer. Residence during the winter is described in a later section.

During most of the year, a couple occupy their own lodge, but occasionally during the winter the individual families of a hunting group all live in one communal lodge. This may have been much more common in the past.

At the time of marriage, the young couple have not only to adjust to each other but to their affinal relatives. No evidence of avoidance between the newlyweds and their parents-in-law was discovered.[6] Deference is shown the latter, but this appears to reflect the age factor.[1] No special relationship was observed between siblings-in-law.

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[1] Lips contended that usually the boy's mother went to the girl's mother, but that if the girl initiated the marriage it was then proper for her father to go to the boy's father (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 420).

[2] The parents of both parties must give their consent (*Ibid.*). But if the girl was determined, she could get her way (*Ibid.*, p. 419).

[3] Parents have no right to force their daughter into marriage (*Ibid.*), but the girl generally accepted the prospective spouse without question (Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 3).

[4] Toward James Bay, presents might be exchanged at marriage, but this was exceptional (Flannery, Position of Women, p. 84).

[5] It was the future husband's duty to provide all household furnishings (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 419), but the father of the young man was supposed to supply him with equipment (*Ibid.*, p. 420).

[6] Cf. Speck, Correction to Kinship, p. 85, no mother-in-law taboo.

Although marriages are stable, they are not without occasional friction.[2] Normally, couples appear to be happy—quarrelling between husband and wife is rare, and affection is frequently expressed.[3] With time, a strong bond develops between a man and his wife. The emotional ties which bind the family together are stronger than those binding the member families of a hunting group.

The nuclear family is one of the most permanent units within the society, disrupted only through death of a spouse, marriage of children, and separation. Possibly as a consequence of church influence, separation is extremely rare, only one case being recorded. A woman left her husband to live with his brother. The action was universally condemned, but nothing was done; the woman bore ten children by her brother-in-law. At first, there was tension between the brothers, but eventually the husband forgave the couple, and the two men associated freely, tending fish-nets together and co-operating in other work. The woman lived with her brother-in-law until his death, and then returned to her husband. She survived him also and is still living. The fact that all the children born to this union died at an early age was regarded by the community as punishment for the woman's transgression.[4]

The nuclear family forms a unit of primary importance in the life of the Mistassini.[5] As an economic unit it rivalled the hunting group in importance.[6] The husband hunts and traps; the wife tends to camp chores. If the wife is sick, her husband will stay close to camp to be with her.[7] Younger boys and girls help the mother, and the older boys assist the father. There are joint undertakings to gather berries and tend fish-nets. Each member is recognized as contributing a share to the common good of the family. This is true to such an extent that traps are set for game of little value in the name of each small child, except infants, and the animals captured are considered the property of the children. Game includes animals whose fur is used at home, such as hare, and a few whose fur is saleable. The latter are placed in account with the Hudson's Bay Company for the children.

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[1] The wife's parents ignore their son-in-law to a certain degree until the birth of a child (Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 3).

[2] Burgesse said that domestic squabbles were frequent (Burgesse, Tribal Laws, p. 18). Occasionally a wife was beaten, but only when the husband was drunk (Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 4). Relatives might intervene if a man neglected his wife, or the wife might go to the chief, but she did not like to. If she did, then the chief could act against her husband (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 423).

[3] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 422; Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 4; McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 424; Speck, Ethical Attributes, p. 570.

[4] Women had equal rights with men in divorce and separation (Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 2; Flannery, Position of Women, p. 84; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 423), but the community reaction was more critical of women. Desertion by one partner dissolved the marriage; this was looked upon as a legally valid divorce (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 423). The reasons for separation were adultery (*Ibid.*, p. 424; McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 424), infertility, disobedience, and laziness, or impotence of the husband (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 424), cruelty and non-support (Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 2-3). After separation, there was no obligation on the part of either party toward the other. According to Lips, the children as a rule remained with the mother, even after they became adults (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 424), although Burgesse said they could remain with either parent (Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 2).

[5] Cf. Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 399.

[6] Lips considered it a hunting unit, which is not quite true (*Ibid.*, p. 387).

[7] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 22. This is not a new development, there being a case reported for the winter of 1839-40 at Mistassini (*Ibid.*, p. 469).

Within the family, legal authority is vested in the husband,[1] but the wife can exercise considerable influence. Often husband and wife discuss each other's work, and the wife gives advice freely.[2] Her advice might not be followed, but no dissension results. The degree to which one dominates the other varies with personality factors. During the early years of marriage, and occasionally throughout a man's life, his authority is confined to his immediate family.

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[1] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 422; Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 7. Wives are, as a rule, well treated (Flannery, Position of Women, p. 84).

[2] Cf. Jesuit Relations, Vol. 68, p. 93; Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 72; Flannery, Position of Women, p. 84.

Chapter IV

SUBSISTENCE

Introduction

Hunting and fishing were the sole means of gaining a livelihood formerly employed by the Mistassini and neighbouring groups. Inter-band trade was minimal, but over the years as the Euro-American demand for furs increased, trade relations assumed greater importance, and the economic life of the people altered. Nevertheless, the Mistassini remained hunters and trappers, merely changing from a subsistence to an extractive economy whereby furs were exchanged for food, clothing, and other articles. Accordingly, the fauna of the area is of prime importance and must be recognized in any discussion of the hunting group – hunting territory complex. In the following, the degree to which the Mistassini depend on various segments of the environment for a living, the changes brought about with the introduction of a fur-trapping economy, and the means whereby the resources are exploited are considered.

Degree of Exploitation

In general, the available resources are utilized to a remarkable extent, subject only to the limitations of Mistassini technology and a few culturally prescribed avoidances. Problems related to securing sufficient food are a major preoccupation of the Mistassini, a topic of conversation throughout the year, and a constant source of anxiety. Starvation was formerly an ever-present possibility.[1] Famines are vividly remembered, and instances were recounted by several informants. In the period 1820–40, a number of cases of starvation and an occasional death from lack of food were recorded.[2]

Formerly, hunting of large mammals was the major occupation[3] of the men throughout the year, although intensified in autumn and winter. In the past, trapping was of minor importance, according to native testimony. Furbearers have little food value unless taken in tremendous quantities, and they are not numerous enough for that. Like grouse and waterfowl, furbearers provided and still provide a supplement to the diet.[4] Beaver and hare constitute exceptions to this. Beaver are classed as "big game" with bear, caribou, and moose, and supply a substantial part of the diet.[1] Hares supplied the necessary furs for clothing and bedding.

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[1] Cf. Burgesse, Our Abused Aborigines, p. 36; McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 427.

[2] 1822–3, one case of starvation; 1827–8, one case; 1830–1, two cases; 1834–5, three cases of starvation and two (?) deaths; 1837–8, four cases of starvation and one death; 1839–40, two cases of starvation (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 454–68).

[3] Cf. McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 412.

[4] Lips contends that the Indians depended upon trapping for the greater portion of their meat supply (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 390).

Of the twenty-eight species of mammals indigenous to the area, fifteen are taken for food, or about 53 per cent. Caribou, moose (within the last thirty to fifty years), bear, and beaver are the most important[2] in the eyes of the Mistassini and in the quantity taken.[3] Other food animals are otter, muskrat, hare, squirrel, lynx, woodchuck, fisher, skunk, porcupine, marten, and mink.

Animals not eaten include dogs, wolverines, wolves, all species of foxes, weasels, flying squirrels, chipmunks, mice, shrews, and moles.

There is hardly a species of bird that is not considered edible, although in general only the larger ones are utilized. The crow is an exception and was never eaten. Of ninety-six species common to the area,[4] twenty are common items of diet. Many of the smaller species of birds, not identified, were also eaten, but only during times of famine. Ducks' eggs are eaten, but those of Spruce Grouse are not, for it is considered bad luck to find this bird's nest. Though birds do not supply much food in terms of poundage, they are important, since they provide sustenance during those periods when big game is difficult to secure.

Fishing is an important source of food throughout the year,[5] although the Mistassini prefer big game.[6] Fish are a dependable food source at most periods of the year but cannot be taken in sufficient quantities to serve as the only means of subsistence. They are vital during the autumn and spring and at any time when the hunters fail to secure large mammals. Nine species of fish are utilized for food: whitefish, lake trout, speckled trout, pike, dore, common and red suckers, burbot, and sturgeon. The first two are considered the most desirable.[1]

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[1] In fact, it has been said of those hunters west of Mistassini, that "Roast Beef was never so important to the English as beaver meat to the Indian" (Watt, Rupert's March, p. 26), and Speck stated that "beaver (was) the northern Indian's meat staple" (Speck, Spiritual Beliefs, p. 271).

[2] Cf. Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 391.

[3] Burgesse believed that the main food sources of the Canadian Indians were decidedly not moose or caribou, but were most often fish, rabbits, squirrels and other small game, with the possible addition of a few berries (Burgesse, Our Abused Aborigines, p. 35–6). Skinner asserted that the mainstay of the Cree in winter was rabbits (Skinner, The Cree, p. 82–3). Burgesse and Skinner are correct in a certain sense: small game is generally available and relatively easy to take and furnishes food during periods when large game is unavailable. In 1808, McKenzie stated that small game was important when other sources failed (McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 408). The Jesuit missionaries reported a similar situation (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 6, p. 267; Vol. 7, p. 107; Vol. 47, p. 171; Vol. 56, p. 79, 83, 85, 101). Burgesse and Skinner are undoubtedly correct when certain groups other than the Mistassini are considered. There appears to be considerable variation within the eastern subarctic as to basic foods utilized. Fish, for example, is of extreme importance in northern Ontario among the Ojibwa of Pekangekum (Dunning, Social and Economic Change, p. 24) and at Round Lake (Rogers, The Round Lake Ojibwa, 1962). And even at Mistassini, there may be some variation within the band, and to a certain extent over time. Anderson gives the food secured by one family for the winters of 1912–13 and 1913–14. Fish and small game played a large part in the diet (Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 102). Anderson was of the opinion that fish first and then beaver were the most important foods to the inland Indian (Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 126).

[4] Godfrey, Birds and Mistassini, p. 13–41.

[5] Cf. Rousseau, Mistassini Calendar, p. 36.

[6] In 1730, Laure noted that the Mistassini lived on caribou and fish (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 68, p. 47), although McKenzie stated in 1808 "these Indians (Montagnais) will sooner want than fish" (McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 427).

Gathering does not play a substantial role in the food economy,[2] although formerly it may have been more important.[3] Berries, the major food collected, are picked during autumn and spring. Many plants, though not eaten, are important in the technology and for medicinal purposes.[4] Most species utilized can be collected without difficulty, since they are abundant and evenly distributed. Exceptions are cedar, formerly used for canoe ribs, and birch bark for covering canoes. Cedar trees are confined to the southern part of the territory, and birch, sufficient in size for canoe coverings, occurs in few areas, primarily to the south.[5]

Over the years, there have been marked changes in the population of game animals, and in consequence the Mistassini have been forced to exploit different species at various times. The evidence indicates a gradual decrease of certain species since European contact. Caribou have slowly declined in numbers[6] and are now found only in the northeastern part of the area. As they diminished, moose began to enter the area about forty to fifty years ago and are now fairly numerous.[7] There are little data regarding bear, which seem to have decreased.[8] The beaver population has fluctuated. In 1672, beaver were said to be abundant,[9] but in 1730[10] and 1895[11] they were reported as scarce. About 1900, beaver provided a major portion of the diet.[12] In 1945, they were again scarce and only recently, with a closed hunting season and with planting, have they begun to replenish their numbers. The hare population has remained constant,[13] except for the normal periodic fluctuations. Fish do not appear to have decreased,[14] except in the eyes of the elders who recall the "good old days." Waterfowl must have been greatly reduced in numbers,[15] because of the extensive slaughter by hunters to the south. There are no data on grouse, but most likely they have followed a pattern similar to hares.

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[1] Cf. Rousseau, Mistassini Calendar, p. 36.

[2] Cf. Lips, Notes on Economy, p. 23.

[3] According to Lips, blueberries were picked in large quantities (*Ibid.*).

[4] Cf. Speck, Medicinal Practices, p. 313–16. Raymond reported 47 species utilized by Manouan Tête de Boule (Raymond, *Notes Ethnobotaniques*, p. 134). This number represents only a fraction of the plant species occurring in the area. The situation at Mistassini is parallel.

[5] Lips stated that in 1830–1 the Mistassini had to go almost to Waswanipi for canoe bark (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 444).

[6] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 56, p. 179; Vol. 68, p. 47; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 388, 453, 463: Low, Report of Explorations, p. 318L; Bell, The Labrador Peninsula, p. 358–9; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 388; Watt, Rupert's March of Time, p. 26; Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 93.

[7] Bell, The Labrador Peninsula, p. 358–9; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 388; Cameron and Morris, The Mammals, p. 129; Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 93.

[8] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 56, p. 179; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 388.

[9] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 56, p. 179.

[10] *Ibid.*, Vol. 68, p. 47.

[11] Bell, The Labrador Peninsula, p. 358–9.

[12] Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 388.

[13] McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 445.

[14] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 56, p. 179; Vol. 68, p. 47; McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 445.

[15] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 56, p. 179.

Today, the environment still supplies a substantial part of the food requirements of many hunting groups. Table 2 gives the amount of food derived from the environment by the Alfie Matoush hunting group during the winter of 1953–4. The group consisted of thirteen individuals ranging in age from one to forty years. There were seven productive members: two married men and their wives, two unmarried men, and one adolescent girl. The group was considered by the trading companies to be one of the more prosperous of those which gathered at Mistassini.

TABLE 2. *Numbers and pounds of game secured from the environment by the Alfie Matoush Hunting Group*

Game	Numbers Taken	Weight in Pounds of Edible Food
Fish	1,582	3,165[1]
Mammals		
Moose	10	4,000[2]
Caribou	12	1,500[2]
Bear	1	210[2]
Beaver	55	2,120[2]
Hare	76	114[2,3]
Muskrat	120	240[2,3]
Porcupine	6	60[2]
Mink	132	33[1,3]
Squirrel	33	8[1,3]
Marten	5	5[1]
Otter	11	110[1]
		8,400
Birds		
Loon	11	44[1]
Geese	12	67[2]
Ducks	132	231[4]
Duck eggs	23	
Ptarmigan	301	150[1]
Spruce Grouse	75	38[1]
Ruffed Grouse	2	1[1]
Owl	2	1[1]
		532
Vegetal Foods	5 large pails of blueberries	
Grand Total		12,097

[1] Estimates from personal observations.
[2] Weights from Theodore E. White, A Method of Calculating the Dietary Percentage, p. 396–8.
[3] Few utilized as food.
[4] Calculated with weight of Black Duck: White, A Method of Calculating the Dietary Percentage, p. 396–8.

From the end of August to the end of May, the Matoush group obtained approximately 70 per cent of the food consumed by themselves and their dogs from the environment. Of this, about 33 per cent was derived from moose, 12 per cent from caribou, 27 per cent from fish, 17 per cent from beaver, 1.7 per cent from bear, 1.6 per cent from grouse, 2.8 per cent from waterfowl, and the remainder from hare, mink, otter, muskrat, and porcupine. Mammals and birds were reserved for human consumption in most instances, while large numbers of fish were fed to the dogs and used for trap bait. There was little waste.

Only one source is known for comparable documentation for past conditions. In Table 3 data are given for the game secured by Robert Peetawabano during 1912–13 and 1913–14. The figures represent the game secured from the beginning of October to the end of May. The group consisted of Robert, his wife, and twelve year old son, his married son Edward, and his wife and infant.[1] There is no information on the amount of store food this group consumed.

TABLE 3. *Numbers and pounds of game secured by the Peetawabano Hunting Group*

Game	Numbers Taken		Weight in Pounds of Edible Food[1]	
	1912–13	1913–14	1912–13	1913–14
Fish	7,300	3,306	14,600.00	6,612.0
Mammals:				
Moose	1	—	430.00	—
Caribou	—	2	—	250.0
Bear	3	3	630.00	630.0
Beaver	59	67	2,360.00	2,680.0
Hare	6,022	1,642	9,033.00	2,463.0
Muskrat	26	55	52.00	110.0
Porcupine	—	—	—	—
Mink	9	4	2.25	1.0
Ermine	10	3	2.50	1.0
Squirrel	—	—	—	—
Marten	53	21	53.00	21.0
Otter	9	8	90.00	80.0
			12,652.75	6,236.0
Birds:				
Loon	18	—	72.00	—
Geese	—	—	—	—
Ducks	40	140	70.00	245.0
Duck eggs	—	—	—	—
Ptarmigan	100	66	50.00	33.0
Owl	—	3	—	1.5
			192.00	279.5
	GRAND TOTAL		27,444.75	13,127.5

[1] Weights derived in same manner as in Table 2.

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[1] Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 102.

Trade Relations

Trade formerly and today has been carried on with neighbouring bands and with Europeans. Interband trade has never been a major consideration in the economy.[1] During the past 300 years, the Mistassini have been brought into the orbit of the European economy through the fur trade. At first, changes were relatively minor.[2] The Mistassini received hardware, rather than food, in exchange for furs. As the game resources diminished and the transportation facilities of the trading companies improved, food began to be exchanged for pelts.[3]

Since 1827, there have been at least several detailed accounts of the fur trade recorded for Mistassini. These accounts indicate the relative importance of each of the furbearers at different periods. Importance varied according to game densities and changing European fashions. Actual data for five years are presented in Table 4.

To make the data comparable, Table 4 has been converted to units of three hunters. In 1828, 14 hunters were involved; in 1865, one; in 1913, two; in 1914, two; and in 1954, three hunters. These data are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 reveals that beaver have been important until recent times. During the 1800's, mink slowly replaced beaver, and in the 1900's mink became a major fur crop at Mistassini.[4] In 1828 marten were important but quickly lost their position. This was due to a decrease in numbers. Muskrat remained important throughout the period. Bear pelts are no longer traded. Furs of small animals such as squirrel and weasel have become more important and sell to the trading companies in increasing numbers.

During the same period there has been a change to greater reliance upon the trading companies for food, as Table 6 indicates.

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[1] Recent sources state that the Mistassini traded regularly with hunters from Nichicun, Neoskweskau, and Fort George (Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 25). Pipestone was imported from James Bay by the Mistassini with the Rupert's House Indians acting as traders and middlemen, and manufactured pipes were traded as far away as the St. Lawrence bands. The northerly Mistassini obtained moose hides from the south by trade. The Nichicun Indians brought to Mistassini porcupine quills for embroidery. Hare skins were sometimes traded (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 443–4). An early source indicated that in 1634, the Montagnais were giving moose hides to the Huron for "cereals," "Indian corn," and tobacco (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 6, p. 273). In 1661, Nekouba or Lake Ducharme, located about half-way between Lake St. John and Lake Mistassini, was said to have been "noted for a Market that is held there every year" (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 46, p. 275). There is no archaeological evidence that this was an old gathering point (Rogers and Rogers, Archaeological Investigations, p. 322-37; Rogers and Bradley, Archaeological Reconnaissance, p. 138–44).

[2] In 1830 the Mistassini Post Journal contained the following: "I stopped with them five days trying all I could to get them to trap martens . . ." (Lips, Notes on Economy, p. 4). Thus, even at this relatively late date, fur trapping was not the major preoccupation that it tends to be today.

[3] Anderson, describing conditions early in this century, said that only a small amount of store food was needed, as country game was still plentiful (Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 27), and that it was still impossible to supply the inland posts with all the trade goods required (*Ibid.*, p. 67). In the period 1913–18, only 8 to 10 tons of freight could be delivered annually by the fur brigade to the Mistassini post (*Ibid.*, p. 91). Dry goods was one of the most profitable trade goods, and by the above date the Mistassini Indians used mainly European clothes (*Ibid.*, p. 92).

[4] This has also been true of the Lake St. John district (Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 13).

TABLE 4. *Numbers of furs secured at Mistassini during 1827–8, 1864–5, 1912–14, and 1953–4*

Species	1828[1]	1865[2]	1913[3]	1914[3]	1954[4]
Bear	15	4	3	3	1
Beaver	551	83	59	67	55
Muskrat	1,505	30	26	55	120
Mink	11	4	9	4	132
Squirrel	—	1	—	—	17
Marten	256	1	53	21	5
Otter	135	3	9	8	10
Weasel	—	2	10	3	225
Fox	3	—	—	1	1
Lynx	5	8	—	—	—

[1] This represents the total furs acquired at Mistassini Post, Hudson's Bay Company, in the year 1827–8. The people listed as belonging to the post were as follows: 10 married men, 12 wives, 22 sons, 29 daughters, three old women, one widow, four unmarried men (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 457). Fur figures (*Ibid.*, p. 449).

[2] This represents the hunt of Pierre Chilnish of Mistassini in the year 1864–5 with that of his wife and son (*Ibid.*, p. 447–8).

[3] This represents the hunt of Robert Peetawabano, his wife, his twelve-year-old son, his married son Edward, wife and infant (Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 102).

[4] This represents the combined hunt of the Matoush group, consisting of two married men, two married women, two teenage boys, one teenage girl, and six children.

TABLE 5. *Numbers of furs secured, converted to units of three hunters*

Species	1828	1865	1912–13	1913–14	1954
Bear	3.2	12.0	4.5	4.5	1.0
Beaver	118.0	249.0	88.5	100.5	55.0
Muskrat	323.0	90.0	39.0	82.5	120.0
Mink	2.5	12.0	13.5	6.0	132.0
Squirrel	—	3.0	—	—	17.0
Marten	54.7	3.0	79.5	31.5	5.0
Otter	28.8	9.0	13.5	12.0	10.0
Weasel	—	6.0	15.0	4.5	225.0
Fox	0.6	—	—	1.5	1.0
Lynx	1.1	24.0	—	—	—

Today, European foods are vital for existence, since game has become depleted and the population has increased. Flour and lard are the most important foods obtained from the trading companies. Other foods such as raisins, salt, tea, baking powder, sugar, canned meats, and fruits are consumed in varying amounts. In Table 6 the weights of various European foods consumed by the Chilnish group and by the Matoush hunting group are listed. The figures for the latter group cover the period August 1953 to July 1954. The data are not complete for the summer months, since

TABLE 6. *Quantities of European foods bought by the Mistassini in 1865 and 1954*

Food	1865[1]	1954[1]
	lb.	lb.
Flour	526.0	2,615
Lard	—	777
Pork	23.75	202
Oatmeal	—	342
Sugar	6.0	228
Beans	—	180
Rice	—	126
Cheese	—	50
Molasses	0.5 (gal.)	—
Totals, lb.	555.75	4,520

[1] Same data as listed in footnotes 2 and 4, Table 4.

there is no record of food purchased with cash, and there are some omissions for the winter. For example, the amount of oatmeal fed to dogs is unknown. Accordingly, the total amount of food consumed closely approximates the nine months from September through May, rather than a whole year.

The weights of European foods utilized by the Matoush group (*see* Table 6) added to products derived from the environment (*see* Table 2) give some idea of the food requirements for one hunting group during the winter. An estimated 10,000 pounds[1] of food consumed by the Matoush group was acquired by hunting, fishing, and gathering. This, in addition to 4,500 pounds of European food, was used in the nine-month period. This allows 1,120 pounds for each individual or about four pounds per person per day. Unfortunately, it was not possible to tabulate the amounts consumed according to sex and age. Observation indicated that men ate much more than women and children.

The preceding material shows the extent of economic change that the Mistassini have undergone since contact. They have become predominantly fur trappers linked to the European economic system. Government aid gives them security against famine, and hunting has decreased in importance. Still, the months away from the summer encampment are spent in long hours of work to secure food, fuel, and furs. Though hunting for food continues during the summer, it is not so intensive. Much less fuel is needed, food can be obtained from the trading companies, and no furbearers are trapped.

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[1] This is based on the assumption that 2,000 pounds of food was fed to the dogs.

Technique of Exploitation

Various techniques are employed in the exploitation of the environment, both in terms of how the hunters operate together and the types of equipment used. These techniques are adapted to the characteristics of the game being sought. The men of the hunting group work in pairs. Occasionally they hunt individually, or all the males may unite. The Mistassini do not have communal hunts composed of men from several hunting groups.[1]

Caribou are taken throughout the year, but the principal period for hunting is during early autumn and winter. Formerly, caribou were hunted primarily in late winter when the snow became deep.[2] The introduction of rifles has made fall hunting possible.

Formerly, caribou were taken with stationary snares,[3] set either in trails or at the entrance to the "corral" of the chute and pound, and with bow and arrow[4] tipped with bone or metal. Dogs were employed in the hunt. Informants disclaimed ever having employed spears for taking caribou, although they were familiar with the practice among the bands to the north.[5] Today, caribou are killed with rifles.[6]

Commonly during the winter, caribou are tracked. Four or more men of one hunting group conduct the hunt, and the group may remain away from base camp for a week or two at a time. Once caribou are located, all the men, under the direction of the leader, co-operate to effect the slaughter of as many animals as possible.

If a number of caribou are killed far from base camp, the men bury the carcasses in the snow and return to camp. Base camp is then moved to within a few miles of the kill in order to save the labour of transporting the meat.[7]

Moose are hunted throughout the year, but most intensively during early fall and from late winter to early spring. The commonest method of hunting is tracking. Occasionally in September and October, during the rutting season, a moose call is used to attract the bulls within gun range. During winter, "moose yards" are sometimes sought. Usually, two men hunt together. A thirty caliber rifle is generally used, although a twenty-two caliber may be sometimes employed. Moose are occasionally killed with an axe. This is done when no gun is available and when the animal is found swimming. The hunters—women have also been known to do this—pursue the animal in a canoe and, on overtaking it, administer the fatal blow. Informants claimed that formerly dogs were used for moose hunting. This seems doubtful, since moose are recent immigrants to the area.

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[1] According to Lips, communal hunts by the band ordinarily did not take place (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 357). Speck reported that the northern families of Mistassini hunted caribou "in communal groups of affiliated families . . ." (Speck, Montagnais Naskapi Bands, p. 577, 592). The use of the chute and pound suggests the possibility of communal hunts of some size but still perhaps not above the hunting group level.

[2] Jesuit Relations, Vol. 7, p. 107.

[3] Cf. McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 412.

[4] Cf. *ibid.*

[5] Lips recorded the use of the spear among the Mistassini (Lips, Notes on Economy, p. 17).

[6] As late as the 1913-18 period most Mistassini used muzzle loaders (Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 101).

[7] Speck reports a case at Mistassini where the whole band moved to a spot where many caribou had been killed (Speck, Naskapi, p. 189).

Bears are killed the year round.[1] Formerly, during the summer, tossing pole snares were erected in bear paths along the shores of lakes and streams. In the fall, unbaited deadfalls and steel traps are set in bear trails about blueberry patches. Late in the same season when bear seek a place to hibernate, they are tracked in an attempt to overtake and kill them. During winter, a search is sometimes made for the dens of hibernating bears,[2] and the small hunting dog is said to be used for this purpose.[3] In the spring, baited deadfalls[4] and steel traps are set at those places along streams where bear come to fish. Bait consists of dried fish wrapped in birchbark. Fish oil is employed for scent.[5]

Today, bear are generally killed with a thirty caliber rifle; snares, deadfalls, and steel traps are seldom or never used. As in former times, they are sought during the fall about blueberry patches, tracked just prior to hibernation, and their dens located in winter. Two men work together in hunting bear.

Beaver and otter are generally taken during the winter from November to March. A few may be secured as late as the end of May. Formerly both species were shot with bow and arrow or taken in baited and unbaited deadfalls. Deadfalls were used during the summer and fall and, presumably, in spring. One informant claimed that beaver and otter deadfalls were set under water during the winter. A hole was cut in the ice, and the trap constructed.

In the past, beaver were secured by breaking into a beaver "house" and removing them by hand. They were then killed with a blow at the base of the skull.[6] Another method of capturing beaver consisted in locating beaver burrows situated along the shore. Small hunting dogs were employed for this purpose. Also, nets were used for the capture of beaver and otter. The net was set under water across a narrow stream. The hunter held the ends of a cord which passed around the edge of the net; he then concealed himself. When an animal struck the net, the hunter pulled the cord taut. This acted as a drawstring and closed the net around the victim.[7]

Today, beaver and otter are generally shot or taken in steel traps[8] and occasionally taken with a net. No more than two men take part in their capture. If no toboggan or sled is available, and if the snow is of the proper consistency, a captured beaver or otter is dragged to camp on its back by means of a *nimapan*.

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[1] Fall is the preferred time (Rousseau, *L'ours chez Mistassins*, p. 32).

[2] Cf. 1634, Jesuit Relations, Vol. 6, p. 307.

[3] Seton claimed that dogs did not scent bear when in hibernation (Seton, Lives, Vol. 2, p. 172).

[4] In 1634, bear were taken in "traps" during the spring (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 6, p. 307).

[5] In addition to the above devices, a spear might be used to dispatch the animal (Lips, Notes on Economy, p. 17).

[6] In 1808 it was said of the Montagnais that they did not understand trenching of a beaver lodge in winter (McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 427).

[7] In 1634, these same techniques were used in capturing beaver (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 6, p. 301).

[8] Steel traps were in use 150 years ago (McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 427). In the 1913-18 period at Mistassini steel traps were used extensively (Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 104).

Hares are hunted throughout the year. This is a task the women and children often perform.[1] Formerly, hares were shot with bow and arrow or taken in stationary, spring-pole, and tossing pole snares.[2] The latter were used in very cold weather instead of the spring-pole snare, which might become frozen. When a thong noose was used, it was rubbed with marten liver to prevent hares from eating it. Today, stationary snares are employed, or occasionally hares are shot with a twenty-two calibre rifle.

Snares are set in runways. During the summer, fall, and occasionally winter, the hunter makes a circuit of one-eighth to one-half mile, sometimes more. He starts generally from the shore of a lake or a stream and sets snares wherever he crosses a runway. During winter, hare snares are often set when the men are trapping other animals.[3]

Mink, marten, fisher, and weasel are hunted during the winter, primarily from November through March. Formerly, baited deadfalls were employed for their capture. In addition, bows and arrows were used for marten.[4] Recently steel traps have come into use. Deadfalls are still occasionally employed for marten.[5] Scent consists of a mixture of "oil of aniseed" and beaver castor, though otter and mink scent glands are sometimes used. A small piece of fresh fish or salt pork is used for bait.

Muskrats are hunted during the fall and rather intensively in late spring. Formerly, they were taken with bow and arrow. Today they are captured in steel traps or shot with twenty-two caliber rifles. Traps are set along streams and lake shores on partially submerged logs. When traps are set during the spring, scent is rubbed on the log. Generally, two men work together, alternately setting traps.

Lynx are hunted during the fall and winter. Formerly, lynx and fox were captured in stationary[6] and spring-pole snares. Steel traps are used today.

Porcupine are killed by striking them on the back of the head with a stick or an axe. If the animal is in a tree, it is dislodged by felling the tree.[7] Porcupine are transported to camp slung across the hunter's back with the aid of a *nimapan* when no sled or toboggan is available.

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[1] It is believed that children who are successful as hare hunters will have luck in later life in hunting large game (Speck, Naskapi, p. 122).

[2] In 1634, hares were caught in "nets" (probably snares) and killed with arrows (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 6, p. 307).

[3] A good hunter might be able to set as many as fifty or a hundred snares in a day and even fifty or sixty of the spring-pole type (Cooper, Snares and Deadfalls, p. 37).

[4] In 1634, marten were taken in "nets" (presumably snares) and killed with arrows (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 6, p. 307).

[5] For the 1913-18 period, it is recorded that the older Mistassini Indians sometimes made deadfalls for marten (Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 104).

[6] Cf. Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 104. Also employed were tossing pole snares (Lips, Trap Systems, p. 17).

[7] In 1634, porcupine were taken in traps (presumably deadfalls) and with the aid of dogs (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 6, p. 305).

Ptarmigan are sought during the winter after they have migrated from the north. Spruce grouse, while taken primarily during the winter, are on occasion sought during other times of the year.

Formerly, ptarmigan and grouse were killed with cross-bows and bows and blunt arrows. Hand-operated snares were employed for spruce grouse and stationary snares for ptarmigan. Ptarmigan were also captured in nets. The net was erected either horizontally above the ground or inclined to the ground. Bait was placed underneath, and the net released manually when a number of birds had gathered.[1] Today, spruce and ruffed grouse are killed with sling shots and twenty-two caliber rifles. Ptarmigan are shot.

Ducks, geese, and loons are hunted during the early fall and intensively during the spring. In the past, waterfowl were taken with bows and arrows. One informant claimed that hunters had nets for snow geese,[2] similar to those for ptarmigan.

At present, decoys are used for geese, black ducks, and American mergansers. Blinds, placed on canoes or on shore, are also used. Geese and both species of loons are attracted by imitating their cries. The birds are killed primarily with shotguns and twenty-two caliber rifles.

Fish are taken continuously throughout the year except during the period when the lakes and streams are beginning to freeze. The most common method of capturing fish is with gill-nets. Fish are occasionally taken with set lines and by jigging during the winter. The last two methods were apparently practised much more in the past than at present. Trolling is infrequently engaged in. Spears as well as nets are employed for sturgeon.

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[1] At times a hunter might catch as many as fifty to sixty birds at once (Lips, Trap Systems, p. 8).

[2] Lips claimed that nets were also used for ducks and loons (*Ibid.*, p. 7). This is extremely doubtful, especially in the latter case.

Chapter V

THE YEARLY CYCLE[1]

Introduction

The following account of the yearly cycle presents the modern situation. Unfortunately, there is meagre information regarding the past, but the data available suggest that the pattern has not changed greatly in the last few hundred years. It is only the summer activities that have undergone the most radical changes.

The Mistassini recognize six periods or seasons of the year (*see* Chart 1). The six seasons, *pIpUn, sikwAn, mIyuskAmu, nipIn, tAhkowacIn,* and *micIskasIc,* are determined on the basis of seasonal climatic changes. Since there are climatic fluctuations from year to year, the dates for the beginning and end of each period vary.

pIpUn, "winter," includes the months of December, January, February, and part of March. During this period, the temperature is rarely high enough to melt the snow. This term is also employed to mean "year." Beginning in March or early April, the snow begins to melt during the day, and *sikwAn,* or "early spring," is said to have begun. This season lasts until break-up, when the ice leaves the lakes and rivers. Today, the period is considered by some Mistassini to begin with Easter, regardless of weather conditions. Following break-up and extending for a few weeks, generally in the month of May, is *mIyuskAmu* (literally "good water"), or "late spring." The period of June, July, August, and part of September is known at *nipIn,* "summer." This season terminates when the ice begins to form about the edges of small ponds. A fifth period, *tAhkowacIn,* or "early fall," begins at this time and lasts until freeze-up, at the end of October or early in November. Freeze-up is denoted by the formation of ice on the lakes, ice which is too thick to force a canoe through, but barely safe to walk on. This is followed during November by a period known as *micIskasIc,* or "late fall."

The seasonal activities and movements of the people conform only in part to the native seasons. Accordingly, on the basis of these activities and movements, the year has been divided into eight periods for convenience of presentation (*see* Chart 1). The Mistassini imply these periods in discussing their yearly activities, even though they do not have names for them. Seasonal feasts mark several of the periods.

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[1] This chapter has appeared in Arctic, Vol. 12, No. 3, p. 130-8, and is reproduced here with only minor additions. It is felt appropriate in the present context to republish it.

The first period begins about the middle of August when the hunting groups leave the summer encampment.[1] Until the middle of September, they are engaged in moving to their trapping territories. At the end of this time, the second period commences and lasts until the middle of October. During this time, the men hunt moose, caribou, and bear, and large quantities of fish are procured and dried.[2] The third period occurs during the latter half of October. During this time, permanent winter camps are erected. Early November marks the beginning of the fourth period. The men spend most of their time trapping furbearers. In early January, a mid-winter feast is held, and the hunting groups prepare to leave their permanent winter camps to move about their lands in search of big game and furbearers. This move initiates the fifth period, which ends about the middle of April. The groups then return to the vicinity of their camps of the previous fall, where they have cached their canoes.[3]

The sixth period extends from the middle of April until the middle of May. The men hunt ducks and loons and trap muskrats and otters. During this period, a spring feast is given. At the end of this time, the hunting groups begin their return to the summer encampment and arrive there the first part of June. This movement forms the seventh period. The final period includes June, July, and early August when the families remain at or near this encampment.

Fall Travel

From about the middle of August to the middle of September, the Mistassini are engaged in moving to their hunting-grounds. The hunting group travels together, each family acting as a semi-independent unit. At the start of the trip, other families may join the group for a day or so when their routes coincide. Travel used to be by birchbark canoe, but in recent years large freighter canoes and outboard motors have been employed. One canoe with a motor tows several others. Caches of gas and flour are sometimes made at various points along the route. This is done to facilitate the return trip in the spring.

During this period, they travel only in fair weather in order to safeguard the health of the small children. If weather conditions are favourable, the group leaves in the morning, between six and ten o'clock. When possible, the day's goal is an old camp-site of the previous year. Depending upon circumstances, camp is made any time between noon and seven in the evening. Stops for meals are spaced about three hours apart. The leader of the group is always the last to leave the camp-site; his canoe is usually the last in line. If a canoe is damaged, the entire party may stop until it is repaired.

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[1] Formerly, the hunting groups apparently dispersed at a later date. It was often November before they left: 1633–4 (LeJeune, Jesuit Relations, Vol. 7, p. 71); 1661–2 (Bailloquet, *Ibid.*, Vol 47, p. 167–71); 1671–2 (de Crepieul, *ibid.*, Vol. 56, p. 73–85), (Albanel, *ibid.*, Vol. 56, p. 157–69); 1672–3 (de Crepieul, *ibid*, Vol. 59, p. 29–47; 1730 (Laure, *ibid.*, Vol. 68, p. 57); 1808 (McKenzie. The King's Posts, p. 416).

[2] According to Burgesse, fall fishing at Mistassini was carried on communally before the hunters moved inland to their respective wintering places (Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 23). This is perhaps correct in that certain families secured and dried fish for the trip inland, but there is no evidence of communal fishing. No sources describing Montagnais life in the 1600's and 1700's mention intensive fishing, either before leaving the summer gathering or after reaching the hunting grounds.

[3] In the 1600's, the routine was less elaborate. Continual search for food was made, but the trapping of furbearers was practically neglected; 1633–4 (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 7, p. 107), 1671 (*Ibid.*, Vol. 56, p. 79).

When rapids are encountered, the canoes are poled or tracked, or equipment and goods are portaged. Often the work of negotiating rapids is done in relays. The supplies are transported ahead while the women and children remain in camp. The next day the camp is moved ahead of the supplies, which are then brought to the new camp.

Whenever absolutely necessary, the supplies and canoes are portaged. Along the frequently used routes of travel, there are well-defined trails, rarely exceeding two miles in length, which have been in use for centuries. Archaeological sites are common here. Tumplines are employed for packing. Everyone in the group participates, even small children.

As soon as camp is established, the personnel of the group may fish, hunt, or set snares if the time and location permit. The most important task is setting gill-nets. Some of the fish taken are eaten within a day or two. The rest are partially dried and consumed within a week or two. Snares are set for rabbits. Muskrats and ducks are hunted. Sometimes a search is made in the vicinity for big game. Occasionally, blueberries are gathered.

Fall Hunt

The members of the hunting group normally reach their land between the middle and end of September. Their arrival marks the beginning of the fall hunt. A base camp is established from which the men hunt big game, but it may be moved to another location after several weeks.

A small feast is given before hunting begins.[1] The men drum and sing, and if the drum "talks" and the drummers feel "good," it is believed that the coming winter will be successful. If a bear is killed before or during the fall hunt, another feast is held; this is also the case when moose and caribou are killed.

During the fall (as well as winter and spring) base camps are located as close to good fishing grounds as possible. However, if a large kill is made, camp is moved and located nearby, without consideration for fishing possibilities. Since protection from the weather is not so important in the fall and spring, camp is often established within a mile of a place where nets can be set. In winter, protection from the northwest wind is desired, often necessitating a camp location several miles from the nets. During the fall hunt, as much game as possible is taken, dried, and stored for winter.

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[1] The food for this feast formerly consisted of a beaver which was first singed and then boiled (Lips, Notes on Economy, p. 7-8); sometimes, it was obligatory for the participants of the feast to remain until the entire beaver was eaten (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 389).

CHART 1

THE YEARLY CYCLE

Date	Activity	Mistassini Seasons
Sept. 1	Fall travel: fishing; hunting ducks and muskrats	*nipIn*
Oct. 1	Fall hunt for bear and moose; fishing; feast	*tAhkowacIn*
	Winter camp: feast	
Nov. 1	—(FREEZE-UP)—	
Dec. 1	Early winter trapping of mink, beaver, and marten; limited hunting, fishing	*micIskasIc*
Jan. 1	New Year's feast	
Feb. 1	Late winter hunting of moose and caribou	*pIpUn*
Mar. 1	Trapping mink, beaver, marten; fishing	
Apr. 1		*sikwAn*
May 1	(BREAK-UP) Spring trapping of otter and muskrat; hunting ducks; fishing; spring feast	
	Spring travel	*mIyuskAmu*
June 1		
July 1	Summer encampment	*nipIn*
Aug. 1		

The Mistassini leave the summer encampment early so as to take advantage of the favourable hunting conditions during this period.

Most hunting is conducted in the neighbourhood of base camp. On occasion, the men establish a hunting camp ten or more miles away. A hunting camp is occupied for several days, rarely longer. Each day, from early morning until almost dark, the men hunt in pairs. They travel as much as 20 to 30 miles in a day, going perhaps 10 miles from camp and returning by another route (*see* Map 3). After a kill has been made, the animal is processed. After this, if there is still time before the permanent early winter camp is to be established, hunting is continued. In addition to hunting big game, the men trap muskrats and occasionally kill ducks.

In the past, large quantities of whitefish and lake trout were taken. Fishing was sometimes continued into November. One informant stated that about twenty years ago as many as a thousand whitefish were taken by his family and dried and stored for the winter. At present, both men and women set and tend gill nets, but there is no attempt to take as many fish as in former years. The nets are examined every day or so. The fish are partially dried by the women and used by the men for food while hunting.

The women and children gather blueberries. Formerly, large quantities were secured, cooked, and dried for the winter. Recently less emphasis has been placed on berrying, and the few which are picked are made into jam and soon eaten.

Winter Camp

During the middle of October, base camp is moved to a new location, which is occupied until January. More substantial lodges are erected. These are often communal dwellings for the entire hunting group. Cache racks are constructed in order to store meat and supplies as well as animal bones. Canoe storage racks are built and supply tents erected. Later, other equipment is constructed, such as hide stretchers and toboggan planing boards. The work of erecting the camp takes from one to two weeks, everyone working from dawn to dark. When the operation is completed, both men and women concentrate on gathering a small supply of firewood.

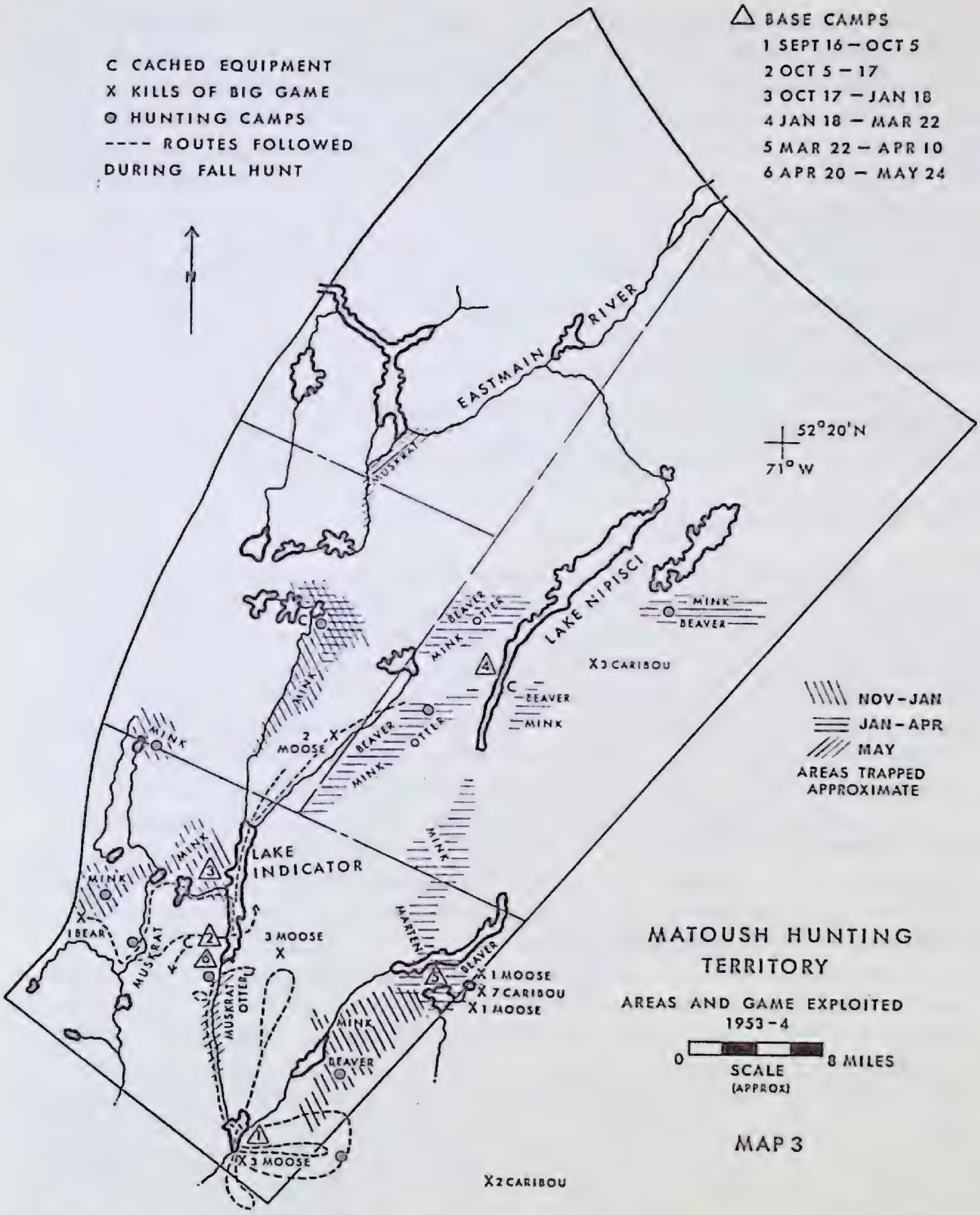
After camp is erected, a feast is given. The feast is a small one if the fall hunt has been poor and if food is limited. The men sing and drum in order to predict their well-being for the winter.

Early Winter Trapping

In the latter part of October or early November, the lakes and rivers begin to freeze and the snow begins to accumulate. The period of freeze-up, which lasts only a week or so, marks the climatic shift to winter. Fish-nets are retrieved to prevent them from becoming frozen in the ice. Nets are not used again until the ice is safe to walk on. During the winter, nets are examined about once a week.

Formerly if food was scarce, the men hunted; but today, as soon as the early winter base camp is established, they start trapping beaver, otter, mink, marten, and weasel. Daily trips are made from the base camp or from temporary camps established 5 to 15 miles from base camp. Rarely do the men remain away from base camp for more than ten to fourteen days at a time. Traps are set in a circuit of from 10 to 20 miles and along the routes to the temporary camps. The men work in pairs and alternate in setting traps. Each man has his own traps, and the furs taken are his own property. An attempt is made to examine the traps every week or so.

When in camp, the men are constantly busy, manufacturing various items of equipment. Snowshoe frames are constructed during this period: swallow-tails in late fall and beaver-tails during the winter. Other manufactured items include toboggans, sleds, snowshovels, skin stretchers, and axe handles. The men, often accompanied by their wives or older children, also tend the fish-nets.



MATOUSH HUNTING TERRITORY

AREAS AND GAME EXPLOITED 1953-4

MAP 3

Women engage in the various tasks about camp, including the collecting of firewood. They attempt to provide a reserve supply, especially during the winter. Wood is transported to camp on a sled or a toboggan. Women generally draw the sleds themselves; men employ dogs. After the logs are conveyed to camp, they are sawed into stove lengths, split into smaller pieces, and piled inside the passage or in front of the lodge. Women and children do most of this work.

Women collect the boughs for flooring. These are gathered in the immediate vicinity of camp. Other duties of the women include lacing snowshoes, making mittens and moccasins, mending, cooking, and preparing hides. In addition to these regular tasks, they hunt ptarmigan and spruce grouse and set a few traps in the area of the camp. Hunting, performed by the women, is of vital importance to the larder, especially when big game and fish are scarce.

Although the entire winter period is a time of intensified activity, the early winter trapping period is exceptionally strenuous. Everyone works from early morning until late in the evening. Outside work is limited by the number of daylight hours and, occasionally, by extreme temperature. The men rarely set traps or travel after dark.

The work routine continues until early January, when the midwinter feast is held. Today, this feast tends to be replaced by a Christmas feast. Shortly after Christmas the traders arrive by plane to buy fur.

Late Winter Trapping

In the past, beginning in January, the hunting groups left their permanent winter camps in search of game. Three days or so were spent in travel and several weeks in hunting; if the hunt was unsuccessful, the process was repeated.[1] Several informants claimed that men continued to hunt all night in clear weather and with a full moon. A circuit of the trapping territory was completed by early spring, and the group returned to the area where the canoes had been cached the previous fall. On occasion, the group took their canoes with them for part of the circuit.

At present, much of this old pattern is in force, although there is less emphasis on hunting. In early January, the traps are collected and preparations for moving are made. The group shifts to another section of the trapping territory where they have not yet trapped, but they now spend more time hunting big game.

This move, which is made with sleds and toboggans, may require a month, even though the distance does not exceed 30 miles. The intensely cold and windy weather prevents extensive travel with small children. In addition, it is necessary to stop early to establish camp, because this task often consumes four hours.[2] If there is much equipment, additional trips are required. Work is limited by the relatively few hours of daylight. There is little or no trapping, since the cold weather forces the animals to seek cover, where they are difficult to capture. At present, when money is available, the group or a family within the group may charter a plane for the move, but the practice is rare.

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[1] The hunting group which LeJeune accompanied from November 1633 until April 1634 made twenty-three halts (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 7, p. 107). This represented an average of about one week at each camp. LeJeune stated: "When our people saw that there was no longer any game within three or four leagues of us . . . " they moved (*Ibid.*, p. 109). The Jesuits noted that the groups were always on the move because of scarcity of food (*Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 145; Vol. 56, p. 81).

[2] The Jesuit missionaries remarked on the time necessary to erect a camp in winter, stating that it took from three to four hours (*Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 113; Vol. 56, p. 83).

With the departure from the early winter camp, each family moves into a canvas tent, both for travelling and as base camps. Occasionally, a communal dwelling (*inImicUwahp*) is employed at base camps.

When a new base camp is established, fish-nets are placed under the ice and traps are set. For both sexes, work is similar to that at the early winter camp.

Hunting camps are established when caribou are sought. Whenever possible, all the men co-operate in making the kill. If the kill is large, camp is moved to the vicinity[1] and a communal lodge erected in which the meat is dried and the hides are prepared. It is considered easier to move the entire camp than to transport the meat if great distances are involved. The communal lodge is considered best for drying meat.

In early April, an Easter feast takes place, and the group begins the return to the canoes. Failure to reach them before the arrival of the spring thaw might prove disastrous. In March and especially April, it is necessary to travel early in the morning before the crust on the snow softens. Often camp breaks as early as four o'clock in the morning.

The period from the freezing to the thawing of the lakes (November to May) is the most difficult part of the year. Throughout this period, it is hard to secure the necessities of life. The large quantity of firewood required is obtained only by great expenditure of labour and time. Hunting is hazardous because of climatic conditions, and animals are often difficult to locate. Fishing is curtailed. This is due not only to the fact that fish remain somewhat inactive in deep water but to the state of the ice which by February is so thick that it sometimes takes nearly a whole day to set one net. Formerly, the small amount of European food brought in by the group in the fall was consumed by mid-winter. Even today, some families have no flour by early spring.

Illness during this period is particularly disruptive, since a husband curtails his hunting if his wife is ill, or ceases hunting if sickness strikes him.

Spring Trapping

By the latter part of April, the group returns to the vicinity of the fall encampment to await the disappearance of the snow and ice. Prior to the thaw, the men collect sufficient wood and boughs for a period of several weeks. This is done because movement is difficult in the melting snow. The condition of the snow does not, however, prevent limited hunting and trapping.

As soon as open water appears in the lakes and streams, traps are set for muskrat. Otter are trapped, and ducks, geese, and loons are hunted. Limited canoe travel is now possible.

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[1] In December 1633 the hunting group LeJeune was living with broke camp and moved to a moose kill (*Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 163), and the process was repeated in February when two moose were killed (*Ibid.*, p. 183).

In the early part of this period, fishing is important. Two factors assure a good supply of fish: (1) gill-nets can be set with a minimum of labour in the open water, and (2) many species are moving into shallow water to spawn. At this season, nets are examined about once a day. In April, the hunting group may camp near good trout ponds and fish with set lines.

Outside activities increase with the added daylight hours. The men often leave to go hunting or trapping by five in the morning and do not return until eight or later in the evening, when they may continue work indoors.

In May, when many ducks, geese, and loons are killed, a spring feast is given.[1] The remaining bear meat and fat are cooked and served.

Spring Travel

Toward the end of May preparations are made to leave for the summer encampment. Canoes are repaired and paddles made. Winter equipment is stored on cache racks. When the ice disappears from the rivers and lakes, the hunting group begins the return trip. They may wait until the water has lowered sufficiently so that any rapids encountered can be negotiated easily. The trip is made in a minimum of time. Where four weeks are necessary in the fall, only four days are now needed if travel is downstream. By the first part of June, all hunting groups have, as a rule, gathered for the summer.[2]

Summer Activities

During the summer little work is done. The contrast with the strenuous and continuous activities of the winter is marked. Summer is the time for social affairs, with dances, marriages followed by feasts, and church services every day except Saturday. Besides, there is time for conversation and gossip with relatives and friends.

A little hunting is done, especially for moose. Loons and ducks are taken when possible, and a few hares snared. Fishing is of major importance, and each family sets one or more nets. Because of the number of people at the summer encampment, there is a heavy drain on the fish population. Nets may have to be set several miles from camp. They are examined almost every day. Much food is obtained from the trading companies during this period. Formerly, birchbark was gathered during June for the manufacture of canoes and boxes.

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[1] In 1808, McKenzie wrote that the Montagnais had a feast in spring in order to congratulate each other on their success during the past winter (McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 416). The feast was apparently held after they had all gathered at the summer encampment. At Rupert's House, this feast was a petition and thanksgiving to the Supreme Being (Cooper, Supreme Being, p. 228).

[2] Toward the end of the last century the same situation prevailed at Mistassini. "Shortly after the breaking up of the ice in the lake, the Indians belonging to the post arrived with their families, bringing in the furs collected during the winter" (Low, Mistassini Region, p. 23).

Some of the men work as guides for fishing parties, in mining camps, and for the government. Women smoke moose hides and make mittens and moccasins to sell to the trading companies. Toward the end of their stay at the summer encampment, the men re-cover canoes with canvas and make paddles and axe handles. During the first part of August, supplies are purchased and equipment is packed in preparation for the trip to the winter camps. By the middle of August, a new cycle begins.

CHAPTER VI

THE HUNTING GROUP

Introduction

The hunting group is a maximal unit of exploitation, and for nine months of the year it represents the largest political, social, and religious unit. In summer, the hunting group as a functioning unit disbands. Each hunting group is associated with a particular territory to which it returns every year.[1]

In Mistassini society, the hunting group is the largest aggregate of individuals who co-operate with one another for any length of time. From the middle of August until late May or early June, the hunting group travels, lives, and works together as a unit. Joint activities are of several kinds. At times, two or more hunters co-operate in order to secure a moose, bear, or herd of caribou. Often two men set traps together, or several women collect boughs or berries. In these activities, except in hunting, each person performs his or her operation independently of the others. Companionship and education seem to be the compelling motives for association. The women who work together are generally from one family: a woman and her daughter or an unmarried female dependant. This is not the case with men, who often are not members of the same family. There are occasions when all members of the group participate in such activities as games and feasts. In other cases, a man and his wife conduct some joint activity. Unmarried males and females of working age are expected to work for, aid, and co-operate with their parents or, if their parents are dead, their guardians. Older teenage boys are not, however, required to turn over the proceeds of their fur trapping to their guardians.

During the winter, each hunting group lives in relative isolation,[2] separated from its neighbours by 10 to 50 miles.[3] Members of the group camp together, either occupying a communal dwelling or each nuclear family living in its own lodge.

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[1] Speck stated that the hunting groups "form the social units of most of the tribes, being unified not only by ties of kinship, but by a community of land and economic interests" (Speck, Land Ownership, p. 323).

[2] Formerly, hunting groups appear to have been dispersed throughout the country during the winter, although they may not have been quite so isolated in the country south of Mistassini. In 1661-2, Dablon gave the impression that he travelled some distance between each "cabin" to tend his flock (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 47, p. 169-71). And in 1730, Laure wrote "In the autumn, they generally scatter for their hunting . . ." and "Afterward, when the chiefs with their bands had dispersed in the woods . . ." (Ibid., Vol. 68, p. 37). In this latter case, he appears to be referring to the hunting group and its leader.

[3] Rousseau recorded the distance as thirty to fifty miles (Rousseau, Mistassini Calendar, p. 36).

Size

The size of hunting groups varies between ten and twenty individuals. Occasionally a group is larger; few are smaller. The data for past conditions, while fragmentary, indicate that among the Montagnais-Naskapi south of Mistassini but north of the St. Lawrence River, the hunting group was of small size. During the 1600's, the groups ranged in numbers from five to perhaps fifty persons.[1] Data for Mistassini over one hundred years ago suggest that the groups were smaller than they are today, numbering between five and fifteen, but the data are not altogether clear.[2] During the twentieth century, hunting group size among other bands in the eastern subarctic has been approximately the same as at Mistassini (*see* Table 7). The small average size of the hunting group among the Abitibi, Waswanipi, Grand Lake Victoria, and Tête de Boule is not in accord with that for other bands. The investigators apparently delimited each man's territory without taking into account the communal nature of the hunting group. For example, Speck listed three Mistassini brothers each with his own territory; nevertheless, these men hunted together.[3] The best material is that for Pekangekum and Berens River.

Composition

Today, the hunting group is generally composed of from three to five nuclear families with dependants.[4] Four families are preferred because the four adult males can hunt and trap together, usually in pairs.[5] Rules of residence affect the composition of the hunting group. Ideally, a man continues to reside with his parents after marriage,[6] although one winter must be spent with the wife's parents. Temporary matrilocal residence occurs within the first three years of marriage.[1] According to informants, a father and his three married sons are the ideal composition of a hunting group. This ideal, however, is rarely achieved,[2] and the males may be more distantly related or occasionally unrelated. The following combinations were recorded during field-work: a man and his unmarried sons; a man, his son-in-law, and his brother's son; several brothers, sometimes including a brother-in-law; a man, his married sons, and the father-in-law of one of the latter.[3] There are several factors which many times prevent the formation of the patrilocal extended family. An increase in the size of a family, if through the birth of sons, necessitates the movement of the excess males to other groups, since the area of exploitation is no longer large enough to support them all and land cannot be bought or taken by force. One informant claimed that a young man would go with a friend who had excess land. Whether by the term "friend" the informant meant a relative is not known, but this is indicated by the data on groupings.[4] Another factor affecting the composition of the hunting group is the sex ratio of offspring. For such small groups there occur instances where the children are predominantly girls. In such cases, the girls at marriage frequently remain at home, and their husbands join the wife's group permanently. On account of the above factors and perhaps others, flexibility in place of residence after marriage permits an equitable adjustment under the existing modes of land tenure and hunting patterns.

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[1] LeClerq. The Establishment of the Faith, p. 89; Jesuit Relations, Vol. 4, p. 203; Vol. 7, p. 69-71, 147; Vol. 46, p. 283; Vol. 56, p. 165; Vol. 59, p. 31, 37, 39.

[2] Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 453-69. On the other hand, Hallowell believed that Berens River groups were larger in the past (Hallowell, Conjuring, p. 28). Certainly some groups were. Warren spoke of a band apparently containing a large number of people travelling together for the fall and winter hunt. They remained together from fear of the Dakota (Warren, History of the Ojibway, p. 188). It is suggested that enlarged hunting group size in the western Ojibway country was the result of warfare, which was common in this area.

[3] Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 465.

[4] From 1820 to 1840 at Mistassini, the group may have consisted of fewer individuals, being composed of no more than two nuclear families (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 453-69). Anderson said that in 1913-18 sometimes three families lived together for the winter (Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 107).

[5] The nuclear family seldom camped alone throughout the winter (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 429).

[6] Lips stated that this was the rule (*Ibid.*, p. 421). Burgesse claimed that at marriage the man generally joined his father-in-law (Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 10) and resided permanently with his father-in-law's family, hunting in the same territory (Burgesse, The Montagnais Hunter, p. 45). Finally, Flannery maintained that "there is no hard and fast rule regarding residence after marriage . . ." (Flannery, Position of Women, p. 81). In 1923 at Mistassini, Speck recorded six and possibly seven cases of men living with fathers-in-law as compared with six cases of men remaining on paternal holdings (Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 462). In the 1820-40 period at Mistassini, at least one case of permanent matrilocal residence was noted (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 406, 431, 458).

Usually one of the male members of the hunting group is somewhat older than the other hunters and acts as leader. Since at Mistassini each old man is as a rule the leader of a hunting group, the number of younger men attached to each leader is dependent upon the number of males in each age group. In 1952–3, there were 35 males over fifty years of age and 126 males between the ages of twenty and fifty, giving a ratio of one old man for 3.6 young men. This approximates the ideal and actual size of the hunting group.

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[1] Cf. Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 3; Speck stated that it was common for a man to join his wife's family and hunt with her father and brothers (Speck, The Social Structure, p. 91). This may refer to temporary matrilocal residence. Apparently, temporary matrilocal residence occurred in the 1820–40 period at Mistassini (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 431, 460, 466).

[2] Speck and Lips stated that a hunting group was usually a patrilocal extended family (Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 462; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 429).

[3] In 1923, Speck noted the following combinations: father and unmarried sons; brothers; father-in-law and son-in-law; brothers-in-law (Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 465, 468, 469). Similar combinations were recorded for the 1820–40 period at Mistassini: father-in-law and son-in-law; father, unmarried sons, and sometimes a married son; brothers; a man and his nephews (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 457, 458–60, 465, 468). Finally, Lips noted that neighbours sometimes hunted collectively (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 429).

[4] Speck and Burgesse remarked that lack of land might lead to group fission (Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 464; Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 4). In addition, Speck stated that a man might join his father-in-law in order to help him if the latter had few sons (Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 464). The position of the father's brother was another factor influencing the composition of the group. Father's brother was considered a protector, especially if the father died or became disabled. Nephews and nieces often were adopted by the paternal uncle, and a young man might receive his hunting education from his father's brother instead of from his father (Speck, Kinship Terms, p. 147).

Table 7. *Hunting group and territorial sizes, and population density among the bands of the Eastern Subarctic*

Band	Hunting Group Size Number of Persons		Territorial Size Square Miles		Pop. Density Sq. Mi./Person	
	Range	Average	Range	Average		Source: *see* footnote to table
Mistassini	6–25	15	300–2,000	1,000(?)	66.0	—
Eastern Cree	10–20(?)	—	—	—	—	11
Attawapiskat	10–25(?)	17(?)	—	—	—	1
Pekangekum	—	20–22	—	266	12.5	2
Berens River	4–49	14.9	13–212	93	6.2	3
Abitibi	4–28	7	—	—	—	4
Waswanipi	4–24	7	600–800	737	93.0	5
Grand Lake	2–23	6	64–1,716	316	55.6	3,12
Tête de Boule	1–13	5.8	—	—	—	6
Lake St. John	9–39	10.2	—	—	—	7
Micmac:						
Newfoundland	—	—	—	2,000	—	10
Cape Breton	—	—	—	400	—	10
Nova Scotia	—	—	—	200	—	10
Penobscot	—	17.6	500–1,000	—	—	8,9

[1] Honigmann, Attawapiskat, p. 58; based on statement that two to five families travel together, and on assumption that there are five people per family.
[2] Dunning, Economic and Demographic, p. 2; based on data given there.
[3] Hallowell, The Size of the Algonkian, p. 40.
[4] Jenkins, The Abitibi, p. 30–1; based on data there and assumption that there were approximately three people for each adult male.
[5] Davidson, Waswanipi Territories, p. 46, 47, 57–9; based on data there and assumption that there are approximately three persons per married male.
[6] Davidson, Tête de Boule, p. 37–45; based on data given there.
[7] Speck, Family Hunting Territories of Lake St. John, p. 396, 399–402; based on data there and the calculation of nine persons per male on basis of 63 males and a population of 583.
[8] Speck, Penobscot Man, p. 15, 203; based on data given there.
[9] *Idem*, The Family Hunting Band, p. 302.
[10] *Ibid*, p. 303–04.
[11] Skinner, The Eastern Cree, p. 57; based on statement that a man usually hunted with his sons and their families.
[12] Davidson, Family Hunting Territory of Grand Lake Victoria, p. 91, 93, 95.

The core of the hunting group is the leader and his family. The same families tend to join him year after year. Nevertheless, changes in affiliations can occur rather easily. For a variety of reasons,[1] one nuclear family may leave a particular group. This may result in a permanent affiliation with another group, or at a later date the family may return to their original group. At some time, a man will have his son-in-law hunting with him, since temporary matrilocal residence is prescribed. Formerly, young unmarried men might hunt with groups other than their own family groups for several years.[1]

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[1] According to Speck, a family might go to hunt elsewhere because of the lack of a particular food on their land. They would secure permission to hunt temporarily on a neighbour's land. Speck noted a case among the Mistassini (Speck, Family Hunting Territories of Lake St. John, p. 390).

Economic Unit

The hunting group and the nuclear family are the principal economic units in Mistassini society. Economic contributions are expected from all members of the group, regardless of age. A child who is old enough to walk over the portages will at least carry a small bundle. A nine-year-old boy will follow his father on each portage trip, carrying a twenty-pound bag of oatmeal or a twenty-four-pound bag of flour.

Every man and woman is capable of manufacturing needed items. There are no specialized craftsmen among the Mistassini. There is, though, a division of labour based on sex. Occasionally both sexes perform the same tasks. In many cases, a man or woman knows how to perform the other's tasks, though not so proficiently. No stigma is attached to a man for performing women's work.[2] In fact, it is usual for a man to help his wife if she is sick or in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

The male's economic role is primarily that of hunter and trapper. It is in these activities that the men of the hunting group most frequently co-operate. Generally, all the men work together when caribou are hunted. Otherwise, they usually work in pairs,[3] but it is not uncommon for a single man to spend a day out hunting or, more likely, trapping. It is very rare that a single hunter remains away overnight. When it is necessary to be away from base camp for more than a day, it is usual for several men to go together.[4]

The men jointly butcher large game and transport it to camp. Bear are dressed by the men.[5] Large hides are prepared by the men, often aided by the women. On occasion, a man will dress smaller game and stretch the pelts.[6] The men set fish-nets under the ice during the winter, but wives often assist in tending the nets. Set lines are placed and tended by either sex. The heavy work of moving supplies is done by the men. They erect the tents or the occasional log cabins and set up the stoves. Almost invariably they run the outboard motors. The men do most of the work required in the manufacture of wooden articles such as snowshoe frames, toboggans, sleds, snowshovels, grease ladles, fish spoons, axe handles, and skin stretchers. In addition, they sometimes collect firewood and boughs.

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[1] Whether or not this was a form of bride service is not known. Such a possibility is suggested by the case of Napaishkish who, in 1829-30, accompanied Otowwyhow because he wanted the latter's daughter for a wife (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 460). Burgesse reported for the Mistassini that a young man would be taken as partner by the owner of the hunting territory. The young man worked for his employer. The employee received board and lodging, but the proceeds of his hunt belonged to his employer (Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 21).

[2] Cf. Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 4, 5; Flannery, Position of Women, p. 83.

[3] This appears to be an old pattern. LeJeune in 1633–4, gave the following examples: "My host and two young men went off to a Beaver Lodge . . ." and got three beaver (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 7, p. 157); "The Sorcerer, having gone hunting on this same day with one of his young nephews . . ." got a porcupine (*Ibid.*, p. 157–9); "my host and a young hunter killed with arrows the Moose . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 161).

[4] LeJeune in 1633–4 reported such a case. Four hunters went to hunt moose for several weeks (*Ibid.*, p. 185). Probably in this case, their families accompanied them.

[5] Formerly it was the men's task to skin the bear's head (Iserhoff, Bear Customs, p. 174), and to cut up the carcass (Speck, Naskapi, p. 96; Iserhoff, Bear Customs, p. 174). Women were prohibited from skinning the head (Iserhoff, Bear Customs, p. 174), but only they could skin the carcass of the bear (Speck, Naskapi, p. 96; Iserhoff, Bear Customs, p. 174; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 433).

[6] Burgesse stated that the care of small game was the usual duty of the men (Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 5).

The economic role of the women of the hunting group is primarily restricted to those tasks performed in and about camp. In the neighbourhood of camp, the women gather boughs and firewood, saw and split the wood, catch fish with set lines, set traps and hunt small game such as hares, squirrels, ptarmigan, and spruce grouse.[1] The hunting of small game by women is of major importance. Frequently, a woman kills grouse or other small game and feeds her family during the lean periods when her husband is away from camp trapping or in search of big game. Sometimes, during the season of open water, women set and tend gill-nets.

In addition to the outdoor tasks, there are innumerable duties to be performed in the home. These include placing new boughs on the floor several times a week, washing clothing, cooking, mending, making and repairing moccasins and mittens, lacing snowshoes, skinning furbearers, and preparing the pelts.[2] In these tasks, the woman is aided by teenage daughters and female dependants.[3] Finally, the small children have to be cared for, although at times older children assume much of this responsibility.

The women of the different families do not co-operate to any great extent, although on occasion they are companions in some enterprise. For example, they may go berrying together, but the berries gathered are for the consumption of each family; there is no distribution. They also may co-operate in gathering spruce and balsam boughs, each bringing back to camp and using the boughs she and her children have gathered. If a sled is shared, the boughs of one are placed on the sled in a direction opposite to the boughs of the other, so that each woman will be able to distinguish those which she herself has gathered.

While the members of the hunting group do not co-operate extensively in the activities of securing a living, they do aid each other tremendously by a distribution of those goods secured. The ideal man is one who gives both time and food to members of the hunting group or to anyone in dire need, especially friends.[4]

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[1] Cf. Burgesse, Woman and Child, p. 6; Rousseau, Mistassini Calendar, p. 36. Women were neither physically nor spiritually disqualified from the pursuit of game (Speck, Naskapi, p. 77), although unmarried girls must never touch a gun (McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 417). Ordinarily, hare were women's and children's prey (Speck, Naskapi, p. 122), as well as ermine and squirrel (Rousseau, Mistassini Calendar, p. 36).

[2] Women were also the principal herbalists (Speck, Medicinal Practices, p. 394; Flannery, Position of Women, p. 85).

[3] Cf. Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 391.

[4] Cf Burgesse, Tribal Laws, p. 18-19; Jesuit Relations, Vol. 6, p. 237.

The attitude of generosity is instilled early in life. A child of three or four may be led by his mother or an older sibling to the tent of another family, carrying a plate of cooked food as a present. The distribution of goods, where no immediate return is expected, takes place primarily between relatives and friends. The goods distributed consist of the products of the hunt.[1] The recipient is expected to share when he is successful.

During the winter, moose and caribou meat and hides are distributed by the hunter[2] to other members of the hunting group.[3] There appears to be a fairly equal allocation to each man, perhaps with the hunter keeping a slightly larger share. On occasion, beaver, hare, grouse, and waterfowl are presented by the hunter to others of the group. Lake trout is always shared.[4] The one who prepares beaver broth and bone soup distributes it to the members of the hunting group.

At feasts, there is always a distribution of such foods as moose, caribou, bear, beaver, geese, duck, and bannock. Bear is distributed primarily by means of feasts. At a bear feast witnessed, part of a bear was cooked and distributed. The remainder of the meat was apportioned at various feasts during the course of the winter.

European foods abandoned by prospectors or government parties are divided by the finder among the members of the group. This is not the case with foods purchased at the stores or obtained from the government. If a family is in need, food is provided, but it is regarded as a loan which the family is expected to repay. Tobacco is shared only at feasts and when visiting graves.

On a person's death, his possessions are stored for one year. During this time, it is taboo to dispose of them. At the end of this period, they are used by members of the family or, occasionally, given to friends. Sometimes one or more of a man's guns or a motor may be sold.[5]

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[1] According to Lips, a gift did not have to be reciprocated by a specific counter gift, nor did it establish a claim on the recipient. It was an outright gift and could not be revoked (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 439).

[2] Game belonged to the hunter who killed it. The finder of game shot by another must give it to the hunter, but the former could keep half the meat, though not the hide (*Ibid.*, p. 435-6). Flannery adds the following: "Once game has been killed and brought to camp, it is the absolute property of the woman. It is up to her to decide how much she will need for the use of her own family and how much she will distribute to others. A man would never interfere in this sphere or even by the slightest hint suggest what disposition she should make of the game" (Flannery, Position of Women, p. 81-2). In the early 1600's among the Montagnais, the wife decided and gave away the provisions as she wished (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 6, p. 233). That the wife had the right of distribution is probably correct. On the basis of direct observations made at Mistassini during 1953-4, the man made the distribution. He may have been directed to do so by his wife. Or, there may have been a change due to the trade relations established with Europeans placing the men in a more prominent economic position. Game as well as furs may now be considered the absolute property of the men.

[3] Cf. Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 17. Burgesse included bear. In another article, Burgesse asserted it was not necessary to share meat with other hunters except when moose were secured jointly (Burgesse, Tribal Laws, p. 19). This may represent a breakdown in the old pattern under the influence of contact, for his information was probably derived from the Lake St. John area.

[4] According to Lips, fish and berries were for the benefit of the whole "family" and not the exclusive property of the one who secured them (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 435). But at Mistassini in 1953-4, they were not distributed to the entire hunting group.

[5] Burgesse reported that twenty-five years ago the Mistassini buried rifles and personal ornaments with their dead. In some cases the rifle was left on top of the grave (Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 16). The clothing of the dead person was not destroyed but laid aside for a year (*Ibid.*, p. 24).

Furs are not shared so frequently as are the hides of moose and caribou.[1] Beaver pelts are given occasionally to other members of the group by the man who secures them.[2] Furs are given annually to the deacon of the Anglican church.[3]

Equipment is sometimes lent,[4] and occasionally the men tend each other's traps and fish nets. The women care for one another's children when one of the women leaves camp to hunt or to gather firewood or boughs. In addition, they render aid at childbirth or when there is sickness. Families in need, whether or not members of the hunting group, are always helped.[5] Signs consisting of specially prepared poles are placed along trails to summon help.[6]

Two stories[7] illustrate the solicitude shown toward friends:

> "Not too long ago, a Nichicun Indian told me how he lost his canoe just before break-up. He had not looked at his canoe before break-up to see if it would be safe. Sometimes there is very high water at break-up. At about this time he went to look at his canoe since he had not examined it all winter. When he got to the place where his canoe had been cached, he found it had been washed away. He could not, of course, travel to the trading post so he made camp on a lake he knew had lots of fish. He had several nets. He made a raft with which to set his nets. He knew that all other hunters were far away and would not be in his area all summer. The Indians at the summer encampment did not know what had happened to this man. They thought he might be sick, or starving, or that he might be dead. He had friends at the post and they told the HBC manager that they had lost a friend. He might be sick or dead. That was all they could tell the manager. That fall a neighbouring family would be passing that way and would look for him. They did this and found the man. He told them what had happened and why he could not go to the summer encampment. The man and his family were all alive but they had no clothes. His friend gave him half his own supply of clothes. He had to. It was very hard. After he had found them, he took them all back to his own land."

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[1] Fur was the property of the hunter, and the money received his sole property (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 435; Speck, Ethical Attributes, p. 578).

[2] According to Lips, only on rare occasions would an individual give some of his furs to another in order to enable him to pay his debts with the Company (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 447). Between 1828–30, the Mistassini Reports cited two cases in which furs were given to others. In one case, a son gave furs to his father and in another, younger brothers supplied their elder brother with furs (*Ibid.*, p. 439, 459). Tanner, about 1800, stated that the Ojibwa and Ottawa of the Assiniboine River shared beaver pelts with unfortunate families (James, Indian Captivity, p. 30). He added that one spring a group of perhaps fifty people went to hunt beaver. "In hunts of this kind, the proceeds are sometimes equally divided, but in this instance every man retained what he had killed" (*Ibid.*, p. 81). In 1766–8, Carver, referring to the Indians south and west of Lake Superior, reported that the flesh of game was divided among the tribe, "But in hunting the beaver a few families usually unite and divide the spoil between them" (Carver, Travels Through the Interior, p. 292).

[3] Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 446. This is not a recent innovation, for in 1808 McKenzie noted the custom (McKenzie, The King's Posts, p. 425).

[4] Lending was as a rule free of charge and was widely practised (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 440; Speck, Ethical Attributes, p. 582.

[5] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 473; Speck, Ethical Attributes, p. 582, 585–6. According to Lips, the rules of mutual assistance had their greatest effect in cases of immediate danger to life or of starvation (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 472). During the 1820–40 period at Mistassini, cases of mutual aid within the hunting group were often referred to (*Ibid.*, p. 458, 460, 465, 466, 468, 469).

[6] Cf. Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 473. Signs were erected only in cases of extreme need, for example, illness, accident, or famine (Lips, Public Opinion, p. 224, 227). Anyone passing a sign must respond and would help (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 475; Burgesse, Tribal Laws, p. 20, 21), even though the sufferer was a most hated neighbour. Public opinion compelled him to do so. If a person did not lend assistance, he might have bad luck and the "Man of the North" might order his winds to cover up the game tracks with snow (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 475).

[7] These stories have been modified from the original in which they were given since the informant's command of English was extremely poor.

> "The whole family died. Starving, I think. They did not come back to the summer encampment. Their friends looked for them that fall. They found a good place to await freeze-up and set up a good camp. They did not find the missing family after searching for them. The missing family had told neighbours that they would see each other that winter but they did not. Come spring and everyone returned to the summer encampment but not this family. It was a large family and they had many friends. Some thought they must be sick or starving. Friends looked for them during the following summer. Found the family's canoes at their camp so they must have been lost during the winter when using toboggans and snowshoes. Hard to tell. For more than half the winter this family may have been starving. Perhaps he couldn't feed his wife and children. That is what the Indians thought. For two summers the family's friends looked for them. Still continued to look for them during the third summer and discovered that the missing family had travelled far away. At last they found their tent and in it the bones of members of the family. After they found the bones they put them in a box and buried them. That was hard."

If a man dies, his wife and children are supported by other members of the group. The economic needs of the elders are provided by their relatives. A son is expected to care for his elderly mother if her husband dies.[1]

The importance of caches is recognized, and the ideal demands that another person's cache must not be touched, except as a form of punishment or as a loan in dire emergency.[2] The borrower left a message in syllabic script.[3] Opening another man's cache in an emergency is not considered theft.[4] Similarly, a man in need can hunt on another man's land. Such a situation is most likely to occur when a man whose family is starving is searching for his neighbour's camp.

Political Unit

The hunting group is the largest political unit at Mistassini for the greater part of the year.[5] The leader is the oldest male member; his real authority, however, is confined to his immediate family and younger dependants. While each family acts as a semi-independent unit, all are willing to follow the leader's initiative. Because of the superior age of the leader, he is considered to have acquired greater religious and practical knowledge and, therefore, to be best qualified to make decisions. A conscientious leader acts in the best interests of his followers and concerns himself with their welfare.

If the leader dies, the oldest surviving male assumes leadership. A man generally does not have the opportunity to become a leader before he reaches the age of forty. A very young man is practically debarred from the position because of lack of experience and religious knowledge. This was formerly more rigidly adhered to than at present, since many of the important aboriginal religious practices considered fundamental to existence were known only by the old men.

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[1] Cf. Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 415.

[2] If a man's needs are great, he could open another's cache without permission (*Ibid.*, p. 473). He could take what he needed but apparently no more than one-half of the contents (*Ibid.*, p. 437). A man must never take a quantity which could result in danger to the owner's life (Burgesse, Tribal Laws, p. 19; Speck, Ethical Attributes, p. 577).

[3] Speck, Ethical Attributes, p. 577.

[4] But according to several authors, public opinion required that the borrower repay the owner as soon as possible (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 473; Burgesse, Tribal Laws, p. 19; Speck, Ethical Attributes, p. 577).

[5] Cooper asserted that for practical purposes it was the biological family, extended family, or near kin group that constituted the functional "political unit" (Cooper, Is the Algonquian Family. p. 71).

The personality factor enters into the leadership when several of the older males are approximately of the same age. In these instances, the man with the more aggressive personality assumes the role of leader. Those who are less dominating either follow him or split from the group.

Assumption of the position of leader is marked by no rites. Leadership is entirely informal, and the leader has little actual control over the actions of member families. Policies are discussed jointly by the men, but the leader's initiative is followed. Members are content to allow the leader to make decisions affecting the whole group. There are times, though, when the leader relinquishes his role. This occurs whenever one of the other males kills a big game animal. The successful hunter determines when and how the game is to be transported to camp and supervises the distribution of the meat.[1] The leader may also permit a younger brother to direct activities for a day, determining the route to be followed and where stops are to be made. When the leader is away, the next oldest male is in charge of the camp. Also, a leader's plans may be changed as a result of another member's dream, although the leader may choose to ignore the revelations.

The pattern of leadership does not reduce the companionship between the men under ordinary conditions. Laughter and sociability are the most noticeable features of interpersonal relations.[2]

Social Unit

The hunting group as a social unit has been touched upon in the preceding material. The members of the group live together and participate in the daily events, which provide the membership with a community of interest. Conversation, companionship, and mutual aid are important aspects of relations within the group.

Within the lodge there are definite conventions determining sitting and sleeping arrangements. Individuals are placed according to age and sex. In single family dwellings, when a feast takes place or visitors arrive, the men sit at the rear of the lodge, the women and children along the sides. The place of honour, occupied by the eldest male member, is in the right rear if the stove is to the left of the door. Normally the owner of the lodge occupies this place. His wife occupies the opposite side. Family members sleep at the rear; siblings of opposite sex who have reached puberty are separated. In two-family communal lodges, the leader and his family are on one side and the second family on the other. The women and children are located nearest the door, and the men toward the rear. No information was secured regarding imaginary lines setting off one family's area from another's, as is the custom to the west.

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[1] Lips contended that the "head" of the party divided the game among the other hunters, regardless of who killed it (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 435).

[2] In 1633, a number of men, women, and children lived in one large cabin, but they all associated amicably (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 5, p. 105).

There are several forms of social activities. Games are occasionally played, with several or all the members of the group participating. The cup-and-pin game, muskrat skull divination, breaking the beaver tibia, and cards, a relatively recent introduction, are the most frequent pastimes. Drinking bouts are another form of social activity but are indulged in rarely by most groups. Men and women drink together. Visiting commonly takes place during the evenings. When each family occupies a separate lodge, it is customary for the entire family to visit a neighbour several times a week. In the majority of cases, they visit the leader's family, as the latter seldom makes formal evening visits. Finally, feasts are social as well as religious events.

Religious Unit

In religious affairs, each individual tends to act independently of others except for feasts and shamanistic performances, activities which contribute to a feeling of group solidarity.

Formerly, shamanism was present in all groups throughout the eastern subarctic, but detailed information regarding it is lacking. Nevertheless, several general observations can be made. The shaman was the strongest power within the society for dealing with the supernatural.[1] There were many occasions during the winter when the aid of a shaman was required, and consequently each group probably had a shaman, or a member with special religious qualifications.[2] Since the shaman's power was acquired with age, he tended to be the oldest male of the group and would, therefore, be its leader[3] with a following of younger men who had not acquired all the necessary qualifications for dealing with the spiritual world. In this way, the shaman acted as a bond holding the hunting group together.

At present, there are few shamans at Mistassini.[4] Informants' statements indicate more shamans in the past, but no data were secured as to whether there was one in each hunting group.[5]

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[1] According to Lips, the shaman also dealt with certain offences against society (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 447).

[2] Cf. Hallowell, Conjuring, p. 28.

[3] For the Attawapiskat Cree, Honigmann stated that the leader of the hunting group was not only the eldest male but a powerful shaman (Honigmann, The Attawapiskat, p. 58). The same situation occurred among the isolated Cree and Ojibwa of Manitoba (Boggs, Culture Change and Personality, p. 56).

[4] In 1913-18, conjuring was still commonly practised (Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 101).

[5] The published sources for the Mistassini give no information regarding this. But data for other groups are suggestive. Speck stated that as a rule each hunting group of the Timiskaming band possessed a shaman (Speck, The Family Hunting Band, p. 295; Speck, Family Hunting Territories in the Ottawa Valley, p. 4). Hallowell wrote of the Berens River Ojibwa that "in aboriginal days at least one conjuror must have been found in every winter hunting group" (Hallowell, Conjuring, p. 28). Honigmann claimed that the same situation existed among the Attawapiskat Cree (Honigmann, The Attawapiskat, p. 58). And today among isolated groups of Cree and Ojibwa of Manitoba one member of the hunting group is a shaman (Boggs, Culture Change and Personality, p. 56). In 1633-4, the group with whom LeJeune spent the winter included a shaman (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 7, p. 69-71).

Feasts are an important part of group life during the winter. Two types of feasts are distinguished by the Mistassini: *mAkUsan,* feast proper, and *apIsis mAkUsan,* "little feast." In the former case, the families of the hunting group or, if in the summer, the entire encampment gather for a joint ceremony. Each family contributes a share of the food. When a "little feast" is given, the families do not eat together; instead, the family providing the feast sends food to each family of the camp.

Some feasts are secular, such as the marriage feast. Others, such as the beaver "eat-all" feast, are divinatory or are given in honour of the slain animal. Christmas and Easter feasts are recent innovations.

The feasts held by the Mistassini are, for convenience, classified into three types: animal feasts, seasonal feasts, and life-cycle feasts. Animal feasts include a beaver "eat-all' feast, a regular beaver feast, caribou, moose, bear, otter, hare-grouse, and large lake trout feasts. Seasonal feasts consist of two in the fall, and one at Christmas, mid-winter, Easter, and spring. Life-cycle feasts are those given at a child's "first step rite," at the time a boy kills his first game, occasionally on a child's birthday, at marriage, and sometimes for a deceased hunter.

Sometimes a feast is given which combines several types. For example, several moose may be killed during the fall, and a moose feast given. This feast may also coincide with one of the fall feasts and conceivably at the same time be in honour of a child's birthday.

Because these feasts follow the same pattern, a description of one will suffice. A bear feast, the most important Mistassini ceremony, was witnessed during the fall of 1953. It was given by the leader of the Matoush hunting group. His younger half-brother had killed the bear. Certain modifications have taken place over the years so that this feast does not conform in its entirety to those of an earlier period.

The feast took place several days after the bear was killed. The meat, except the head and forelegs, was smoked for one day and then boiled on the day of the feast.

The ceremony was held in the evening. Everyone assembled in the leader's tent, bringing plates, cups, and knives. The men and older boys sat at the rear while the women and children sat along either side in family groups. The leader was seated at the right rear of the tent from the entrance. Large cloths and oilcloths were placed on the floor. Before the leader were cigarettes and tobacco. In front of the men and in a line parallel to them were three pans containing food. The pan on the right nearest the leader held the bear's head. This had been boiled but not smoked. Next was a pan containing the bear's intestines, stuffed with bear fat. Resting on these was a grease ladle. An adjacent pan contained the forelegs and paws which had been spitted and cooked, but not smoked. Beyond these pans was a small dish containing liquid bear grease and a large pan containing other sections of the bear—backbone, ribs, rear paws, rear legs, and pelvic bones. Between this large pan and the stove was a second dish of grease and a large kettle of tea. These were opposite the women. There was no bannock.

After everyone arrived, the leader passed cigarettes and tobacco to the adults who began to smoke. After smoking a few minutes, the leader arranged the pans of meat. In front of him he placed the three pans which had been arranged in a line before the men. He propped the grease ladle beside his right foot. Next, a piece of meat was cut from the skull, then a piece of intestine was severed, and finally, a piece of meat was removed from the forelegs. Each piece was placed in the bowl of the grease ladle. The leader then passed the ladle to his younger half-brother, the killer of the bear, who emptied the contents of the ladle carefully on the fire in the stove.[1]

The large pan containing the other sections of the bear was now placed in front of the man who had killed the animal. Empty pans were arranged in front of the other men, and in each of these was placed a portion of the contents from the large container. The men divided the meat, placing a portion on each person's plate. After the meat was distributed, the empty pans were removed and the plates passed to their owners.

The leader then dipped the grease ladle into the pan containing the intestines and collected a little grease on the bowl of the ladle. He poured this on his fingers and rubbed the grease through his hair. Following this, he drank a ladle full of grease. He then cut a piece of intestine, a piece of meat from the head and one from the forelegs, and placed these on his plate. The pans were passed to the other men and finally to the women, and all repeated the performance of the leader. The women, however, did not take any meat from the forelegs or paws. Unfortunately, it was not observed if the women took meat from the skull. Presumably they did not.

After the leader had served himself from the head, forepaws, and intestines, he asked for tea. His wife poured it for him and for the others on her side of the tent. A woman on the opposite side of the tent poured tea for those on that side.

Next, the people began eating, using knives and fingers. Part way through the meal, the head, intestines, and forepaws were passed again. Eventually, bannock was procured and given to the very young children who had been crying for it.

At the completion of the meal, the leader, assisted by another man, placed the skull and forelegs in the pan with the intestines. The grease ladle was arranged upside down on top of the skull. The pan was placed at the centre of a cloth, and the edges of the latter were folded over the top of the meat and ladle, and tied. The pan was then handed to the leader's wife who put it away. Following this, each married woman wrapped the remainder of her family's food and set it aside to be taken home. At this particular feast, after the pans and dishes were removed, the men reclined and smoked.

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[1] In 1730, Laure recorded the following: "Among themselves they seldom drink or eat until they have offered to their dead a small quantity of their food or beverage, which they throw into the fire" (Jesuit Relations. Vol. 68, p. 47–9).

Today, men often drum at the conclusion of a feast, and on the basis of available field evidence, this is the only time. Formerly, drumming was also performed prior to a feast. Informants stated that the "old men" were the drummers, but several men in their thirties were observed drumming. A man begins to drum when in his twenties, generally after marriage. He is taught by his father. One informant claimed that long ago women also drummed.

During the fall, the men frequently drum at the end of feasts in order to secure knowledge of the coming winter. By drumming, the men determine what success they will have in hunting[1] and whether the group will be short of food. An informant said that if the drummer "likes to sing and drum will be good luck the whole winter." If not, some misfortune will occur, perhaps something disastrous. Formerly, the old men drummed all night, but this is rarely or never the case at present.

Drumming is an individual affair. During a performance each man in turn drums and sings. At several performances witnessed, the leader of the hunting group asked his young son to bring his drum. It was then hung before the leader by a suspension cord attached to a large pin, thrust through the canvas roof of the lodge. The bottom of the drum was raised several inches above the floor.

The drummer sang in a barely audible voice. Occasionally he stopped to smoke. During the performance, other members of the group might listen, converse in low tones, or play games, especially the children.

After the leader of the group finished, he passed the drum to the next senior member of the group. Each might drum for an hour or two. When all the men had performed, the leader put the drum away.

Group Stability

The hunting group is a relatively stable unit, despite a certain amount of variability in membership. The factors responsible for shifts in group membership are not well understood. Open conflict between members is rare, but suppressed hostilities exist.

Tensions may develop between hunting partners. One man will ask another to spend the winter with him, but if the guest traps more fur than his host, the latter is apt to feel aggrieved. The envy may result in a quarrel which can lead to a fight if the men have been drinking. These tensions may reflect the influence of the fur trade. Today, furs are individual property, in contrast to the old pattern in which all natural resources were freely shared among all members of the group.

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[1] A man drummed the night before going out on a hunt (Cooper, Field Notes on Magic, p. 514).

The leadership pattern may also lead to stress within the group. Two men whose qualifications for leadership are similar may separate if both have aggressive personalities. During the winter of 1953–4, one case of this type was observed. The younger half-brother of the leader of the Matoush group in attempting to follow his own plans, was thwarted by the leader. The following year this youth, together with his own younger brother and another of the leader's younger brothers, left to form another hunting group.[1] As far as is known, no hostility between the individuals resulted.

Generosity appears to be a factor in intra-group conflict. With the development of individual ownership of furs and European foods, the nuclear family has become more independent economically. Tensions arise from conflicting attitudes. There is an attempt to retain economic independence, and at the same time accept the moral and religious responsibility of supporting a poor hunter and his family who may be part of the hunting group. This problem may not have been important in the past.[2] Within the Matoush group, the brother-in-law of the leader was a very poor hunter, and his deficiencies had to be compensated for by the other males. The leader and a half-brother on several occasions commented upon their brother-in-law in a manner clearly indicating their dissatisfaction with him.

Another aspect of life among the Mistassini which may lead to group fission is famine. Statements in the literature indicate that groups sometimes dispersed so that all might have a better chance of survival. Dispersal may have survival value, but there is another plausible explanation. During periods of famine, members of the group may lose faith in the leader's ability to intercede with the supernatural, although there are no explicit statements in the literature to the effect that loss of faith in the leader resulted in group fission.

Data with respect to inter-group relationships are minimal. Assistance provided other groups has been discussed above. There may have been rivalry among the shamans, "old men," or leaders of different groups.[3] Accusations of witchcraft may have been frequent in the past and may have contributed to inter-group hostility.[4] Dreams prompting antisocial actions (*see* Social Features) could easily result in discord.

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[1] Wilfrid Jefferys, pers. comm.

[2] But cf. LeJeune's report of such a case in 1633–4 (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 7, p. 173).

[3] Few instances of rivalry between shamans or leaders are noted in the literature. A case was recorded in the early 1600's in which a shaman used his religious powers against a rival (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 6, p. 195–9). In 1672, Albanel wrote that an old man of Mistassini was at odds with a "Captain" of the "Mataouiriou Nation" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 56, p. 105–9). These leaders lived near each other, but it is not known that they were shamans. Speck and Lips asserted that rivalry between shamans occurred (Speck, Naskapi, p. 49; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 482).

[4] In the early 1600's, LeClerq reported a case of this nature (LeClerq, The Establishment of the Faith, p. 192–4).

Chapter VII

THE HUNTING TERRITORY

Each hunting group has a territory over which it habitually hunts, traps, and fishes during the winter.[1] Within this tract, from September until May, a series of base camps are established from which the men operate (*see* Map 3). These camps are located near prominent bodies of water. The same bodies of water are utilized year after year, but new camp-sites are usually selected, for firewood and boughs adjacent to the camp area are exhausted after one winter.

A hunting territory, although in general delimited by boundaries, is conceived by the Mistassini as consisting of a series of lakes and rivers which link together a specific region. These bodies of water are utilized each year by the hunting group as travel routes, and their shores as camping areas.[2] The boundaries of each group's territory are known only within a limit of several miles.[3] Several informants could not locate boundaries to some sections of their territories except in a vague manner.[4] An old informant claimed that in camp (presumably the summer encampment), men from adjacent regions discussed the boundary problems and decided how far each group would hunt from a base camp.

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[1] Cf. Rousseau, Mistassini Calendar, p. 33–4.

[2] Before 1850, or certainly 1800, hunting territories as they are known today did not exist. In 1633–4, LeJeune, referring to the Montagnais group with whom he spent the winter, wrote: "My Savage and the Sorcerer, his brother, having learned that there were a great many Montagnais near the place where they wished to pass the winter, decided to turn Northward, lest we should starve each other . . . we had scarcely made three leagues in crossing the great river (i.e., the St. Lawrence), when we met four canoes which turned us back to the South, saying the hunting was not good up North" (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 7, p. 97). "The third news was that our people had discovered the trail of several Savages, who were nearer to us than we thought, for they were coming to hunt upon our very grounds, taking away our game and our lives at the same time" (*Ibid.*, p. 171). "These new guests were not asked why they came upon our boundaries . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 177). LeJeune's statements clearly indicate that the people of this hunting group had freedom to go where they wished. The mention of boundaries is LeJeune's idea of the situation, not that of the Indians. Albanel in 1672 reported that he was stopped by three Mistassini men, one of whom said, "Black Gown, stay here; our old man, the master of this country, must be notified of thy arrival. I will go and tell him." Albanel continued, "It is no new thing for the Savages, obeying a maxim of their policy or of their avarice, to be extremely cautious in granting strangers a passage by way of their rivers, to distant Nations. The rivers are to them what fields are to the French, their sole source of subsistence—whether in the form of fish and game, or in that of traffic" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 56, p. 173). Albanel's account implies that some notion of land rights was in existence, but it is not clear exactly what was involved. Was it at the band or hunting group level? By the early 1800's, many Mistassini hunting groups were habitually using particular tracts of land (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 431, 453, 458, 460, 465, 467), but there is no indication that these areas had boundaries.

[3] Cf. Speck. The Social Structure, p. 91.

[4] According to Lips, the borders of the territories were designated in part by rivers, lakes, hills, and trees (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 427), there being, according to Speck, no methods of marking the boundaries of the territory by means of blazes or other landmarks (Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 460).

At present the size of a hunting territory varies, depending upon the size of the hunting group, the topography, and the population pressure. The largest territory recorded for one hunting group (the Alfie Matoush group) is approximately 2,000 square miles. The group normally consists of three married men and their families. This appears to be the maximal tract exploited by one hunting group. The smallest territory, about 300 square miles, is utilized by two married men and their families. The average area for all the bands gathering at Lake Mistassini is about 260 square miles for each hunter.[1] The average area for each man within one of five hunting groups from which there are adequate data varies from approximately 130 square miles to nearly 500 square miles.[2]

A family ordinarily returns to the territory of the same hunting group year after year. But this practice is not followed under certain conditions. Temporary matrilocal residence and deficiencies of the game supply may compel couples to go elsewhere. They may remain permanently with the man's father-in-law or temporarily join a friend.[3] One case was reported in which a man's wife became ill while travelling, and the family spent the winter with the man's son-in-law. Furthermore, it was formerly the custom for young unmarried men to hunt with another group for several years.[4]

Today, the government has attempted to assign each man to a specific territory with rigidly defined boundaries, which will be referred to as a *trapping territory*. In practice, no hunter exploits by himself the land so defined. All the men of the hunting group hunt, fish, and trap together on the combined lands of the members with no regard for internal boundaries. They speak of the total land exploited by the hunting group as "our land." An individual's territory is referred to as "my land."[5]

The territories are not named; rather they are designated by the names of the lakes and rivers on which base camps are established.[6]

The hunting group does not have exclusive rights to all the resources of the territory.[7] Resources are of two types. Those resources employed for an individual's or his family's personal needs are free goods; those which are sold or traded to the whites are generally considered the property of the hunting group.[1]

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[1] For 1828-9, an estimate of approximately 1,000 square miles per hunter can be made on the basis of data supplied by Lips (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 458-9).

[2] *See* Table 7 for figures applying to other groups within the eastern subarctic.

[3] Cf. Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 9, 21; Speck, The Social Structure, p. 91.

[4] In the past at Mistassini, each family had greater freedom to go to other areas than their habitual hunting and trapping regions (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 456, 458, 459, 460, 464, 465-6, 467, 468).

[5] "The land" (Burgesse, Property, Concepts, p. 11); "my district" (Speck, The Social Structure, p. 91); "my ground" (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 427); or "my path or road" (Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 460). Burgesse contended that "my path or road" signified a trap-line and not the hunting territory (Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 11).

[6] Cf. Speck, The Social Structure, p. 91; Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 11. According to Burgesse, territories were sometimes given the owner's name (*Ibid.*, p. 11) or, according to Speck, the territories might be named after an event that occurred there (Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 465).

[7] Cf. Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 12.

On the basis of direct observation, resources which at times are considered free goods include fishing grounds,[2] berry patches,[3] firewood, boughs, waterfowl,[4] and wood for the manufacture of various items.[5] Unfortunately, little information was obtained regarding mammals. Specific cases suggest that hare, moose, perhaps caribou,[6] and muskrat are communal property.[7]

Resources that are habitually exploited for sale to Europeans are considered the property of the hunting group.[8]

In the 1820–30 period at Mistassini, resources must have been free goods, since an individual had freedom to move wherever he wished. One case did occur in which an individual was prevented from trapping any beaver unless he had the express permission of his father-in-law.[9] This, of course, represents the old pattern of serving the wife's parents, and yet it suggests that furbearers, especially beaver, were becoming important in the economy and could be controlled by the will of one man. In the

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[1] According to Lips, under conditions of famine, a person had the right to obtain food, even beaver, wherever he could find it (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 472–3). Speck added the following specific information regarding the Mistassini: When hunting porcupine, they proceeded a little way up the long rivers which flow from the northeast. Should they fail to obtain a supply of porcupine, they were compelled to pass far into the higher land for caribou, sometimes moving so far in this direction that they were on Nichicun land. Reciprocal privileges were recognized between the two bands, for when pressed by famine in summer, the Nichicun assumed the right to descend the rivers toward Lake Mistassini and hunt bear on Mistassini territory (Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 458–9). Besides the right to take game anywhere under famine conditions, free passage was granted across the hunting territory of another (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 429), and no formal permission was needed (Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 12). Travellers had the right to fish and to shoot all the animals they saw or needed for food, including beaver (*Ibid.*, p. 12, 23; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 432), and to borrow if in need from caches (Burgesse, Tribal Laws, p. 19). A case occurring in 1878 is reported by Lips. Joe Kak'wa was travelling across Thomas Matabe's land and killed a bear. He gave some to Thomas (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 433).

[2] Cf. Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 11, 23; Cooper, Is the Algonquian Family, p. 69; Lips Naskapi Law, p. 429.

[3] Cf. Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 11; Cooper, Is the Algonquian Family, p. 69; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 429.

[4] Cf. Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 12.

[5] Birchbark was added by Cooper for the Tête de Boule (Cooper, Is the Algonquian Family, p. 69). According to Lips, if the hunter should meet the owner of the land, it was customary but not required that he share the berries or fish with him (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 429).

[6] Burgesse stated that these were free goods (Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 12).

[7] The position of beaver is not clear. Some of Burgesse's informants claimed that beaver could be killed, but the pelt must be given to the owner of the land or other reimbursement made. Others claimed that this was not necessary (*Ibid.*, p. 12). This discrepancy may reflect the dual role of beaver in the economy, both as big game animals and as furbearers. According to Burgesse, beaver were regarded primarily as food animals and secondarily as furbearers (*Ibid.*, p. 12).

[8] An individual had no right to gather furs and meat on another's land for the purpose of sale (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 432; Burgesse, Tribal Laws, p. 9; Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 12), nor to molest the furbearers when travelling through another's territory (Burgesse, Tribal Laws, p. 19). Cooper stated that the rights claimed by the holder of the land had reference first to the muskrat (apparently not the case for Mistassini) and beaver (Cooper, Is the Algonquian Family, p. 68). The marking of beaver lodges within the hunting territory by the owner of the territory again suggests the dual role of beaver in the economy (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 432), because if territorial rights were strictly enforced, there would be no need to mark the lodges.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 466.

1600's there is no evidence for the situation at Mistassini, but in the area to the south, all resources appear to have been free goods.[1]

There is no evidence to suggest that the Mistassini are or were interested in the conservation[2] of resources.[3]

Present attitudes toward trespass are not well crystallized. One old informant stated that a hunter would not take game on another's land unless starving. Under those conditions, he had a right to obtain food wherever he could find it.

Men sometimes hunt within the margins of territory belonging to another group. Permission is not secured. No evidence was obtained to indicate that this is considered trespass. In one instance, a hunter took an otter from a neighbour's land during the fall of 1953 but reported the kill to the neighbour the following summer. Several cases were recorded, and one case was witnessed where the Matoush hunting group killed caribou on the land of the Lake St. John band. The group did not consider this improper; on one occasion, when the owner of the land arrived at the kill, they did not even offer him any meat. In addition, they took beaver on this land. These cases may be atypical since some Mistassini, at least, consider themselves superior to the Lake St. John Indians. Prior to the above incidents, trapping had been done by men from Lake St. John a short distance within the Matoush territory, and one of the party had even been buried there. The current attitude appears to be that hunting along the margins of another's territory is permissible.[1] Few cases of trespass have been recorded for Mistassini in the literature. Two occurred about the turn of the last century. In the first case, no action was taken, possibly because the intruder was a shaman. Public opinion condemned the trespass; this may have induced the trespasser to move to the south of Lake Chibougamau.[2] The second case involved an outsider. A Waswanipi trespassed on a Mistassini hunter's land, but the two men[3] settled the case amicably. In the 1820–40 period at Mistassini, at least seven instances of "trespassing" were recorded.[4] There is no indication that these acts were resented, and there is no record of action taken against the outsiders.[5]

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[1] To the west, individual or family ownership of resources was first documented during the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1859, Kohl reported that among the Ojibwa south of Lake Superior, beaver dams, sugar camps, and cranberry patches were family property (Kohl, Kitchi-Gami, p. 421). And Grant in 1804 wrote of the Ojibwa "whoever discovers a beaver lodge and marks it may consider it his undoubted property, and no other person will attempt to destroy it without his permission" (Grant, The Sauteux, p. 326). Data on the sharing of furs, especially beaver, previous to the early 1800's have already been presented. These and the preceding data indicate that before 1800 furbearers were considered free goods. In 1730 Father Laure implied this, when he wrote of the Montagnais's "ignorance of the value of his furs . . ." (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 68, p. 53).

[2] The term "conservation" is employed in this paper to mean a conscious effort by an individual or a group to refrain from indiscriminant slaughter of game.

[3] Several views regarding the practice of conservation have been presented; one, that the people consciously practised some form of conservation in the past (Speck, The Family Hunting Band, p. 293–4; Speck, The Social Structure, p. 91; Cooper, Is the Algonquian Family, p. 69; Cooper, Land Tenure, p. 57; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 388; Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 12; Watt, Rupert's March of Time, p. 26). Beaver are the only animals specifically mentioned in this connection (Cooper. Is the Algonquian Family, p. 69; Jenkins, The Abitibi, p. 13; Watt, Rupert's March of Time, p. 26; Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 388). Lips believed that these practices remained of interest to the hunter and that they were still followed (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 388). Both Lips and Burgesse contended that a hunter never killed more than he and his family needed (*Ibid.*, p. 435; Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 15). The testimony of other writers does not bear this out. Neilson recounted the case of a Mistassini hunter who brought in a number of skins of small beaver. When asked why he had done so, he said that if he had not, someone else would have taken them (Neilson, Mistassini Territory, p. 152). Watt reported for Rupert's House that in the two decades, 1918–38, family rights to the resources within the hunting territory seemed to have lapsed entirely. Mrs. Watt gave the case of an Indian who avoided killing the beaver in a few lodges for the purpose of conservation; however, his brother killed them without his knowledge. The owner had no recourse (Watt, Rupert's March of Time, p. 26). Cooper felt that conservation was foreign to the Montagnais, who usually killed everything they saw (Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 23) except furbearers, especially beaver. Furbearers were apt to be protected because they were considered more in the nature of personal property and, in contrast to big game, were not so likely to wander into the territory of a neighbour (*Ibid.*, p. 24). Davidson and Jenkins reported for the Grand Lake Victoria and Abitibi bands that they formerly practised conservation, but that they relinquished these practices with the encroachment of white trappers who disregarded conservation measures (Davidson, Family Hunting Territories of Grand Lake Victoria, p. 86; Jenkins, The Abitibi, p. 13). In the early contact period there is no evidence that conservation was practised. Rather, game of all kinds was slaughtered whenever the opportunity arose (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 7, p. 57; Vol. 69, p. 113). The preceding data suggest that conservation was not practised by the subarctic Algonkians until toward the latter part of the nineteenth century. The practice then lapsed during the second quarter of the twentieth century.

The leader of the hunting group owns the land.[6] The process by which the rights in the land are secured is not rigidly codified. The particular situation is the controlling factor.[7] The leader may allocate sections of the land to his followers, whether sons or sons-in-law.[8] In theory, land is allocated to the men of the hunting group regardless of their relationship to the leader. Even though each may have his territory and speak of it as "my land," the entire territory is referred to as "our land."[9] The problem here seems to have arisen on account of the government's attempt to establish individual trapping territories.

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[1] The problem of trespass is not clarified by the published sources. According to Lips, individuals who were not travelling or in urgent need of food, but who continuously hunted on another's territory were considered trespassers. They might include members of the same band, a foreign band, or whites (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 433). Speck, on the other hand, claimed that trespass seemed to be little regarded (Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 460) and not resented (Speck, The Social Structure, p. 91). Burgesse asserted that the only way trespass was controlled in the past was by public opinion (Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 10). Both Lips and Speck stated that conjuring was employed against the poacher (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 476–84; Speck, Mistassini Hunting Territories, p. 460). No cases have been described in which conjuring was employed. Another method of dealing with an interloper, according to Lips, was first to speak to him and then if he did not stop his depredations, the offended party went to the chief for aid (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 403).

[2] Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 21–2.

[3] Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 402–03.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 433, 434, 458, 460, 464, 469.

[5] Within the Montagnais area there is no information regarding trespass in earlier periods. However, since the hunting group was free to move wherever it wished, trespass could not have been a problem.

[6] According to Lips, many Indians seemed to believe that the game animals, not the Indians, were the true owners of the hunting grounds (*Ibid.*, p. 389). The land was not owned outright; each individual had a usufruct and hunting right (*Ibid.*, p. 187).

[7] Territory could not be sold outright nor could any hunting privileges be sold (Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 9).

[8] Cf. Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 30.

[9] According to Lips, when a man became too old to trap, rights to his land passed to his son (*Ibid.*, p. 435). Furthermore, even though a man allocated land to the members of his family, on his death the entire hunting territory became the property of his eldest son. The latter might renew former agreements but was under no obligation to do so (*Ibid.*, p. 430). Burgesse contended that when a section of territory had been turned over to an individual for trapping, he could henceforth claim it as his own hunting ground and pass it on to his heirs (Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 10). Finally, if a family died out, the chief had authority to redistribute the land among the remaining families of the band (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 403).

Chapter VIII

SUMMARY

Since the beginning of European contact, the socio-economic system of the Mistassini has undergone certain changes. Data are meagre for the period 1600–1800. Consequently, it has been necessary to consult the literature regarding surrounding groups. This information is, nevertheless, considered applicable to the Mistassini. The following is a summation of the data given in preceding sections of this work. It has been thought wise to bring it together here before making any analysis of the hunting group – hunting territory complex.

1600–1800

For the 1600's and 1700's, information on the hunting groups and land tenure is scant. Bands probably were of small size and rather amorphous. Each was under the guidance of a head man who exercised little actual power. Late in the fall the bands broke up into hunting groups consisting of from five to fifty individuals, usually kinsmen. The oldest active male of the group functioned as leader but had little power outside his immediate family. Often, if not always, one member of the group, presumably the leader, was a shaman, and in this capacity wielded considerable power. His duties included combating the *wihtIko,* curing the sick, and foretelling the future, especially with regard to hunting. Each hunting group lived apart during the winter, but with the advent of spring, all assembled at a summer encampment. Hunting was a major occupation, and each group moved continually in search of large and small game. Beaver and porcupine were sought in early winter, but as the snow increased in depth, large game such as caribou became important. No conservation of resources was practised. Fishing and trapping were unimportant. The principal furs exchanged with the traders were beaver (which was also a major food source) and marten. Trade goods were few and consisted primarily of equipment and clothing. The sparsity of natural resources and the lack of supplementary European foods prevented the inhabitants from trapping intensively. Most of a man's time was spent in search of food. There is no evidence that each group controlled a hunting territory or made habitual use of a particular area, although this is to be expected. Great freedom prevailed in the choice of a winter area. All resources appear to have been considered free goods.

1800–1850

The more intensive European contacts that developed in the early nineteenth century brought about certain modifications in the socio-economic system.

Trapping increased somewhat, but beaver still constituted the major furbearer. Under certain conditions, beaver were occasionally considered private property, though all other resources were still free goods. Summer trapping was discouraged by the traders, but otherwise conservation was not practised. Each hunting group tended to exploit a particular area, but no rigidly defined rights to the territory existed, and there was a good deal of latitude allowed in selection of the winter location. The size of the hunting group became constricted, ranging from five to fifteen related individuals.

Most of the old pattern continued to persist. Bands remained small, and the position of the headman was unaltered. The band dispersed each fall, and the hunting groups generally spent the winter in isolation. The group leader continued to be an older male, who may also have been a shaman. In any case, one member of the group probably assumed the shaman's role. Shamans continued to exert a great deal of power. Winter was spent in quest of food, since only minimal amounts of European foods were imported into the country. Fishing still does not appear to have played a very important part in the economy.

1850–1900

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, numerous changes had occurred in Mistassini society. The band had become enlarged but had few characteristics to distinguish it from neighbouring bands. Chieftaincy developed during this period. Chiefs had rather limited powers, although some appear to have exercised more control than their predecessors. They dealt primarily with disputes over property rights. Trapping, though more intensive than formerly, was not so important as it is today. Beaver remained important; marten no longer was. There is no evidence as to the significance of fishing, but it may have been more extensive. Furbearers were now considered private property, although resources for home consumption were free goods. A hunting territory system was rigidly adhered to; the boundaries of each territory were known, and trespass was frowned upon. Conservation was practised. A territory was inherited generally by a family member. The shaman's power was now directed against the violation of property rights; the chief acted in the settlement of disputes over land.

Other aspects of the socio-economic system remained unaltered. For the greater part of the year, the hunting group was still the major political, social, and economic unit. Each group was composed of kin, with one of the males as leader. There are no data for group size, although it was apparently small. One member of the group probably acted as shaman. His powers were still employed to combat the *wihtIko,* cure the sick, and predict the future. Each group left the summer encampment in early fall and did not return until late spring.

1900–1950

Beginning in the early 1900's certain aspects of the hunting group and hunting territory were altered. Shamanism decreased greatly in importance, and few groups now included a shaman among their numbers. Fall fishing and big game hunting increased in importance. Winter trapping of furbearers, having now become the basis of the economy, was a major occupation, and mink, not beaver, was the most important animal taken. Although the smaller furbearers, such as squirrels and weasels, had been largely ignored by hunters in previous times, they now attained importance. During spring, hunting, especially of water-fowl, and fishing were of major concern. Conservation was no longer practised. Trespassing was uncommon, although there were no longer adequate checks against it, since shamanism had decreased in importance, and chiefs had little real control.

Band organization remained unchanged, although the power of the chief diminished slightly. The hunting group was still the most important unit in the society for the greater part of the year. The group was composed of kin and numbered from ten to twenty-five individuals. The oldest male was leader, although he had little control over the actions of the group members outside his immediate family. Each hunting group had a territory to which it normally returned each year. The territories, which all had known boundaries, were inherited. Resources for home consumption were considered free goods, but furbearers tended to be considered private property.

CHAPTER IX

ANALYSIS

For the past thirty years, hunting groups and hunting territories have provided a focus for discussion of problems involved in the social organization of the Indians inhabiting the eastern subarctic of Canada. The major object of this paper is to offer an interpretation of these aspects of social organization, based primarily on data relating to the Mistassini Indians. A second concern is the assessment of theories proposed by other workers which attempt to account for these features.

Authorities on Northeastern Indians have treated hunting groups and hunting territories as interdependent variables, but evidence to be presented demonstrates that these are essentially independent and therefore should be analysed separately. In the analysis of hunting groups, factors that tend to set the limits of group size are identified and discussed. Two sets of factors are conceived as operating jointly; one set exerts pressure toward increasing the number of members in the hunting unit, while the influence of the other set tends to reduce group size. As a consequence of these opposing factors, hunting groups manifest a limited sized range. Although hunting groups represent an aboriginal phenomenon, historical evidence shows that hunting territories developed recently. The elements contributing to this development will be examined and discussed.

The following procedure will be employed. First, the problem of the determinants of hunting group size will be discussed with reference to the situation as it exists today among the Mistassini, and as it existed formerly among the Mistassini and Montagnais generally. Secondly, the development of hunting territories will be considered. A third section will consist of an appraisal of the theories advanced by other workers to explain the size of hunting groups and the origin of hunting territories.

Factors Responsible for Small Hunting Groups

Mistassini hunting groups at the present time range in size from six to twenty-five persons. Several general factors critical for understanding this limited range of variation in group size are ecology,[1] religious and socio-economic patterns, and acculturation. A number of specific variables within these general categories will be examined with respect to their contribution toward expansion or reduction of group size.

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[1] "Ecology" is used in this paper to mean the linkages or interactions exhibited between a people's way of life and the physical environment, mediated through the technological knowledge and possessions of the people.

The poverty and harshness of the subarctic environment bring ecological problems into sharp focus. Life for the Mistassini is difficult and uncertain; winters are severe; resources are minimal; the animals are generally solitary and widely scattered. In this environmental setting a certain degree of mobility is essential for a hunting society, and the transportation system thus becomes a crucial factor for subsistence activities. Mistassini technology is simple; human beings supply the basic motive power, whether snowshoes, toboggans, or sleds are used. Sled dogs, although employed, are not of great importance. Transportation facilities, therefore, impose limits on the extent of movement possible. No more than 1,500 square miles can be utilized by one group travelling together during the winter. In conjunction with the limited territory which can be exploited, the poverty of the environment affects group size. The densities of the game animals exploited are extremely low. An area of several hundred square miles is needed to support a hunter and his wife and children. Restrictions imposed by the transportation facilities, together with the poverty of environmental resources, impose a maximal limit to hunting group size. If nearly 300 square miles are needed to support a family and a group can only exploit 1,500 square miles, group size cannot exceed five families.

Although low game density characterizes the entire Mistassini area, during the fall there is a relative abundance of fish and waterfowl in certain favourably dispersed localities. The time during which these resources can be exploited is limited, because the movement of fish into shallow water (where they can be caught with ease) and the migration of waterfowl last only a few weeks. The Mistassini emphasize the need to accumulate as much food as possible during the fall, so that the food quest can be relaxed to some degree during the winter, when food is scarce and fur trapping becomes a major preoccupation. In order to amass food during the fall, they hunt big game and take advantage of the temporary seasonal abundance of fish and waterfowl. The Matoush group of thirteen individuals exhausted the game within any one favourable area in two or three weeks. The number of favourable areas that can be exploited is limited because of the poor transportation facilities and the brief period during which these resources are abundant. In order to take maximal advantage of the available resources at this time of year, hunting groups must be small as well as being dispersed.

Another environmental limitation arises from the supply of firewood required by a hunting group during the early winter trapping period. During this interval, all available time is spent in securing as many furs as possible, and camp is not moved. The Matoush hunting group, composed of thirteen individuals, depleted the fuel supply in the vicinity of their early winter camp-site in three months. A larger group would have been forced to move camp in a shorter period of time, thereby reducing the time at their disposal for trapping. The exhaustion of the available fuel supply is, therefore, another factor favouring the small size of hunting groups, under the present economy.

Certain anthropologists working in the eastern subarctic have stated that environmental conditions are a sufficient explanation for the small size of hunting groups. Though these factors are important, they are not the sole determinants. Non-environmental factors are equally significant. Two of these are socio-economic in nature: the habit of moving camp to a large kill rather than bringing in the meat, and the system of distributing meat and hides.

The habit of moving camp to a kill[1] within the context of current hunting patterns limits maximal group size. Hunting patterns are adjusted to the characteristics of the major game animals which, with the exception of caribou, are non-migratory, dispersed, solitary, and few in numbers. To secure this game the Mistassini hunt in two-man teams which radiate in different directions from camp—the greater the number of hunting teams in the group, the higher the possibility of making more than a single kill in one day. If several kills are made simultaneously, in view of the habit of moving camp to the kill, the group would have to divide. On the other hand, if the group was large and only one kill was made, the amount of meat allotted to each nuclear family would be extremely small, perhaps not equivalent to the energy expended in moving to the kill. In order to obtain sufficient food with two-man teams and to keep the group intact when moving to a kill, the hunting group must be limited to a small number of persons.

A second socio-economic factor inhibiting large group size is the distribution system, which is highly informal. Meat and hides are always distributed by the individual hunter or his wife to other members of the hunting group. This system is adequate for a small group, but it is questionable that the method would be effective within a large group. Bear and moose are usually killed singly. An individual animal is of sufficient size that under the present system of distribution all can receive an adequate share. But if animals of this nature were distributed within a large group, a systematic procedure would be required for an equitable allocation of meat and hides. But no culturally prescribed system of division of game is recognized, nor is there an authority figure with sufficient power to organize a system of distribution if group size was increased.

Other non-environmental factors arise from the acculturation of the Mistassini. The acculturative factors act concurrently with the environmental and socio-economic influences on group size.

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[1] Moving the camp rather than the slaughtered game may be due to several causes, and can be considered advantageous for life in the subarctic. The weight of camp goods to be moved is sometimes less than the amount of meat and hides secured, and moving camp is therefore more efficient than moving the kill. Furthermore, men, women, and children co-operate, thereby increasing the labour force. If the kill were transported to camp, only the men would participate. Another suggested advantage is that group co-operation in moving camp furthers group solidarity. In addition, an implicit advantage that occurs for the group is the maintenance of skills in moving. The ability to move efficiently under the critical conditions found in the subarctic is basic to group survival.

Today, the Mistassini participate fully in the fur trade introduced by Europeans, and this now forms the basis of their economic system. The fur-bearing animals within the territory of a hunting group belong equally to all members of the group, though the furs themselves are considered the property of the individual who secures them and as a rule are not shared with other members of the group. Conflict arises because the new pattern of private ownership of furs is in opposition to the older pattern of sharing with all members equally; the men are in direct competition for the fur-bearing animals. Hostility may be engendered between hunting partners, one accusing the other of taking more than his share of furs, since as yet individualistic values are poorly integrated within the society. A fight may result if both men have been drinking. In any case, the partnership may be dissolved. Tensions arising from the competition for furs thus intensify tendencies toward restriction of group size.

The above ecological, socio-economic, and acculturative variables are considered responsible, in part at least, for inhibiting the size of the hunting group and preventing it from increasing beyond a relatively constant upper limit. The factors act in combination. Each exerts a pressure toward reduced group size, but none alone is considered sufficient to produce the results observed. In opposition to this set of variables is a second set which tends to prevent group size from decreasing below a minimum. This set consists of ecological, religious, and social variables.

Only one animal species available to the Mistassini, the caribou, is migratory and gregarious, but the presence of this type of game significantly influences group structure. Although caribou herds are small, effective hunting requires the utilization of all available manpower. A single hunter or a two-man team would be relatively ineffective in exploiting these animals. A tendency to increase group size is therefore encouraged. This was, of course, truer in the past than at the present time, as caribou have greatly decreased in numbers.

Another factor related to environmental conditions may be summarized under the heading "crisis situations." As noted previously, subarctic environment is severe in the extreme, and human life is hazardous. Crisis such as accidents, misfortunes, and illness are frequent. Hunting is difficult and uncertain. If, as frequently happens, one hunter fails to secure game for some time, the aid given by the other hunters will save his family from starvation. Similarly, the sharing of hides for clothing and equipment often prevents a family from undergoing hardships. Accidents such as breaking through the ice or being seriously cut with an axe are frequent. In such cases, survival depends on immediate aid, and if the individual's condition prevents full participation in economic duties for any length of time, his family must be cared for. A nuclear family living in isolation would be relatively helpless in this situation. The Mistassini overcome these problems by forming hunting groups composed of several nuclear families who assist each other according to a well-developed pattern of mutual aid.

In addition to the ecological factors outlined, religious beliefs are important in uniting several nuclear families. Much of the Mistassini religious system is concerned with problems connected with hunting. Only the old men are fully proficient in religious activities; predicting success in the hunt, interceding with the game rulers, and combating the *wihtIko*. Young men lacking proper religious knowledge are at a disadvantage if they do not accompany an older man. These factors reduce the likelihood that the hunting group could be composed of a single nuclear family.[1] The introduction of Christianity has tended to weaken the importance of the aboriginal religious system, although the latter still plays an important part in the life of the people.

Other elements binding several nuclear families together are inherent in the social patterns. A man's education, though informal, continues well into middle age. He requires guidance from his elders in hunting, in the manufacture of equipment, and especially in religious lore. Besides the relation of dependence between young and old men, there are strong solidarity bonds, between father and sons and between brothers, based partly on the regard for age, which link individuals together to form the nucleus of the hunting group. There is resistance to the separation of father and son or of brothers.

The ecological and cultural factors that prevent group size from decreasing below a given number act together. This set of factors opposes those forces previously described as operating to prevent the group from increasing in size. The restricted range of hunting group size found at Mistassini today represents a balanced adjustment to these sets of limiting variables.

Mistassini and Montagnais in the Past

Historical evidence clearly indicates that hunting group size has been relatively constant since the time of contact. Groups have ranged from five to forty-five members. The latter figure is exceptional and probably represents an unusual case of three hunting groups uniting for a part of one winter.

Historical data for the early contact period are limited, but the records were examined in order to check the conclusions reached after an analysis of the Mistassini materials. Ecological, socio-economic, and acculturative factors were investigated. In general, most of the variables, which in the preceding section were described as limiting the size of the Mistassini group, were also found to oppose an increase in hunting group size in the past. The environment was similar to that of the present; the distribution system and the habit of moving camp to a kill were the same.

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[1] The age distribution of males at Mistassini is such that there are three to four young men for every old man. Accordingly, there will be, on the average, approximately five males with families together for the winter. This closely approximates the ideal as stated by informants and the actual situation at Mistassini.

Additional variables were formerly present in the religious system. Three features of the religious system are regarded as indices of tensions in interpersonal relations: shamanism, witchcraft, and dreams requiring antisocial behaviour. It is suggested that the tensions engendered by these religious features were resolved by means of separation. Certainly today, hostilities between individuals are commonly adjusted in this manner rather than by resort to a face-to-face encounter.

Three variables considered as limiting maximal group size today were not present in the past. These are the emphasis on fall hunting and fishing, the competition for furs as a result of the fur trade, and the exhaustion of firewood during the early winter trapping period when no moves are made. There is no direct evidence in the historical sources to indicate that fall fishing and hunting were practised; the band did not disperse for the winter hunt until late in the fall or early winter. The fur trade was not a factor during the early period of contact, since furs were considered free goods and hunting was the predominant economic activity. Finally, the historical accounts suggest more frequent moves than at present, thereby lessening the need to seriously consider the demands placed on the supply of firewood.

Factors imposing limits on minimal hunting group size in the past were similar to and in some instances more important than those operating today. Caribou were formerly more numerous and, consequently, were more important for food. Accordingly, co-operation among hunters was more frequent. Religious knowledge was more important for the spiritual well-being of the hunters before the introduction of Christianity. Crisis situations have remained the same, as have the bonds between male kinsmen.

In general it appears that little significant change has occurred since the time of contact. Most of the same factors operated in the past to set upper and lower limits to the size of hunting groups.

Factors Responsible for the Development of Hunting Territories

Theoretically, at least, four systems of land tenure are possible within the eastern subarctic, based on the technological level of the inhabitants and the environmental conditions. There is a fifth—a recent introduction imposed by Government officials—which at the time this study was made had not been accepted. One is a *hunting territory system,* where each hunting group habitually returns to a specified and delimited tract of land every winter. Members of the group have sole rights to the resources within the area, and trespass is resented and punished. Boundaries define the area. The second system is less rigidly defined. The group returns to the same general area each year but possesses no exclusive rights to the resources. The area has no sharply demarcated boundaries. This constellation of features can be termed a *"hunting range system"*[1] or *hunting area.*

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[1] The term "range" has been adopted from ecology, where the meaning is roughly comparable to that given here. *Vide* Bourlière, The Natural History, p. 100.

A third, the *allotment system,* involves a decision by the band chief or the elders each summer as to where the hunting groups will spend the coming winter. In a fourth type, *free wandering,*[1] each group acts independently of all others and moves freely without regard to other groups. The fifth system is that of *trapping territories* with definite boundaries, which are assigned to individual hunters by the government. Since the last-mentioned system was in effect only on paper at the time of the present study, no more need be said regarding it.

Information concerning the type of tenure at the time of contact is not entirely clear. There is no indication of a hunting territory system, nor of an allotment system.[2] The absence of any mention of trespass, conservation, ownership of resources by the group, or of shamans employed to punish trespassers clearly indicates the lack of hunting territories. An allotment system is improbable because of the cultural traditions of the Mistassini. The Mistassini and other Montagnais bands have never had either the strong political authority structure or the active group cooperation that would be required by an allotment system. The fourth system, that of independent groups moving freely within a territory, would be relatively inefficient and might jeopardize group survival. The poverty of resources limits the number of people that can exist in a given area, and the transportation facilities limit the extent of territory that can be traversed. Several groups in the same area would therefore face possible starvation. Nevertheless, the St. Lawrence Montagnais on occasion employed this system. Dwindling game resources, reduction in native population, and an influx of foreign Indians to the newly established trading posts may have initiated such a system. The probability is that a hunting area system existed at the time of contact; this system is attested for the Mistassini in the 1820–40 period.

The contention is that a hunting territory system evolved with the introduction of a fur trade economy. This system was favoured by two conditions: the exploitation of sedentary, solitary, and dispersed furbearers, and the weak political authority pattern of the Mistassini. The fur trade stimulated or encouraged new attitudes toward conservation, trespass, and hunting group ownership of resources. These traits, absent at the time of contact, are crucial for the development of hunting territories. The practice of conservation, it is believed, encourages a sense of proprietorship in the resources conserved and a desire to prevent others from interfering. Ownership of mobile resources such as furbearers must be associated with a defined area since wild animals cannot be marked to denote ownership. Only with the ideas of exclusive property rights and conservation does trespass become a problem, but in order to define an act of trespass, the area in which property rights are held and conservation is practised must be defined. Once an act of trespass is recognized, means must be found to prevent or punish its occurrence.

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[1] Wauchope, Seminars in Archaeology, p. 135.

[2] Bailey, however, believed that the allotment system was employed in the eastern subarctic (Bailey, Conflict of Cultures, p. 86).

Conservation, property rights, trespass, and punishment of trespass, then, are intimately connected with the concept of hunting territories. The following discussion explains how these ideas were adopted by the Mistassini and the Montagnais in general and formed the basis for the hunting territory system.

The first step in the formation of hunting territories was the change in property rights regarding furs and furbearers. At the time of contact all natural resources were considered free goods, but in the nineteenth century, furs came to be considered the property of the individual hunter, and furbearers the property of the hunting group. That rights to certain resources came into existence is correlated with the highly evolved fur trade of the late nineteenth century, when increasing numbers of furs were exchanged for trade goods. The hunter considered trade goods individual property and extended the concept to include the furs, by means of which trade goods were secured.

Two conditions account for the fact that the individual and not the group came to control the ownership of furs. First, the traders always dealt with the individual hunter[1] rather than with group leaders. Each man was given credit and was considered responsible by the trader for the debt. Secondly, the concept of individual responsibility was favoured by the political pattern in Mistassini society. No authority structure existed that could prevent an individual from dealing directly with the trader.

Gradually, the furbearers themselves came to be considered the property, not of the individual hunter but of the hunting group. The factors operating against individual ownership of furbearers were the practice of hunting in two-man teams and the stability of hunting group size, even under the impact of the fur trade. Since all the men of the hunting group exploited the same area, working in pairs, it was impossible for each man to have a separate territory within which he could consider the furbearers his own property.[2]

With the growing development of private property rights[3] in certain resources, conservation measures became practical. At the time of contact, conservation was not practised, but it was soon encouraged by Europeans, who have continued to do so to the present day.[4] The Mistassini did not accept the idea of conservation until the latter part of the nineteenth century, but the practice is believed to have strengthened land ownership concepts. That it is not practised today is due to the large increase of population necessitating full utilization of all available resources for existence.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[2] Lips disagrees, stating that there was no evidence that the Hudson's Bay Company influenced property concepts (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 187).

[3] "Private property," as employed in this paper, means the property owned by an individual or a hunting group.

[4] Anderson states that the Hudson's Bay Company, about 1835, discouraged the taking of too many beaver, especially small ones (Anderson, Fur Trader's Story, p. 183).

The development of private property concepts[1] and conservation measures posed a new problem—trespass. A lack of trespass at the time of contact is consistent with the Montagnais idea that all resources were free goods. Acts of trespass were not reported until the late 1800's, coincident with the development of private property rights in furbearers and conservation practices. With the possibility of trespass, some means had to be devised to protect the hunting area. Since band political organization was weakly developed, prevention and punishment of acts of trespass were left to the hunting group. The most powerful member of the group was the leader, who in many instances also acted as a shaman. This individual, then, assumed a new role: that of law enforcement agent. Historical sources contain no record of the shaman punishing trespassers before the 1800's.

The development of the present system of land tenure was intimately associated with the concepts of private ownership of furbearers, conservation, and trespass. Private ownership of furbearers and the practice of conservation necessitate some form of relatively permanent land use by the hunting groups. Hunting areas were probably extant at the time of contact; they were definitely in existence among the Mistassini by 1825. The hunting area system was transformed into the hunting territory system once the resources found within the area were considered private property, a concept that led to practices regarding conservation and trespass. Recognition of trespass necessitated a more clearly defined area of exploitation by the hunting group with the consequent development of boundaries. Punishment of trespass, conservation, and private property rights discouraged indiscriminate land use and prompted each hunting group to return regularly to its land.

With the establishment of boundaries, punishment of trespass by shamans, conservation of resources, private ownership of furbearers by the hunting group, and a concept of land ownership by the hunting group, the hunting territory system was fully developed.

The hunting territory system was, however, doomed and by the mid-twentieth century was no longer the effective system that it had been in the late 1800's. Several reasons can be advanced for its collapse. With government aid assuring adequate food, the population increased. As the population increased, game resources lessened and individuals came into conflict over the furbearers. With the fear that a neighbour might obtain them before another did, one took all one could. Accordingly, conservation practices fell into disuse. That a neighbour might trespass and take game on another's land resulted from a breakdown in the old religious system. Missionary efforts in time broke the power of the shaman who in the past had had the ability to punish trespassers. With the lapsing of conservation and the disappearance of the shaman, the hunting territory system was a shallow reflection of its former self.

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[1] 1635 (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 7, p. 59); 1730 (*Ibid.*, Vol. 68, p. 109); 1835 (Lips, Naskapi Law, p. 434); Burgesse, Property Concepts, p. 14–15).

The latest although not necessarily the final change has been the Government's introduction of individual trapping territories. This change as yet has not altered the situation but may be expected to do so in the future in conjunction with other factors and events.

Examination of Previous Theories

During the past three decades several writers have presented theories concerning the factors responsible for hunting groups and hunting territories in the eastern subarctic. In most cases interest has been focused on hunting territories, although the presence of hunting groups is implied if not explicitly discussed. In any case, the two phenomena have been treated as interdependent variables. Basically, the theories are of two kinds. One maintains that hunting groups and hunting territories are the result of the fur trade. The other contends that these phenomena are aboriginal, representing an adjustment to environmental conditions. Steward, Leacock, Jenness, and Bailey favour the first view[1]; Cooper, Speck, and Eiseley advocate the second.[2]

The argument that the fur trade was responsible for the development of hunting groups and hunting territories is correct only in part. Bailey and Jenness believed that the band or kinship group was the land-holding unit originally, but that when beaver became commercially important the large units broke up into family units. With the adoption of conservation, a vital interest in the trapping area was consequently developed by the family. This gave rise to family ownership of hunting territories. However, there is no evidence that the band or kinship unit was a land-holding unit. Instead, evidence indicates that a hunting area system, exploited by hunting groups, existed at the time of contact. Further, though ideas of conservation aided the development of hunting territories, the changes which occurred in property concepts were of primary importance. Jenness and Bailey did not take these changes into account.

Since the ideas advanced by Leacock and Steward coincide only in part, they are examined separately. Leacock, working among the eastern Montagnais-Naskapi, considered the fur trade responsible for the development of hunting territories and for the reduction in the size of the economic unit. She felt that the fur trade provided an adequate explanation of these phenomena throughout the eastern subarctic. According to Leacock, the economy shifted from co-operative caribou hunting, in which proceeds were shared, to fur trapping and dependence on European foods. With this change, the family came to resent trespass on its trapping grounds and developed a sense of proprietorship. Private ownership of resources resulted from a "sale-exchange" economy introduced by the fur trade. Private ownership of resources laid the basis for the inheritance of rights in land.

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[1] Steward, Theory of Culture Change, p. 144–51; Leacock, Montagnais Hunting Territories, p. 2, 6, 7, 22; Jenness, Indians of Canada, p. 124; Bailey, Social Revolution p. 271.

[2] Cooper, Is the Algonquian Family, p. 80–90; Cooper, Land Tenure, p. 58–9; Cooper, Culture of the Northeast, p. 291–2; Speck, Land Ownership, p. 330; Speck and Eiseley, Montagnais-Naskapi Bands, p. 219, 240–2; Speck and Eiseley, Significance of Hunting Territory Systems, p. 270–9.

Leacock's analysis provides the best explanation for the origin of hunting territories. If she had confined her argument to the Seven Islands and Natashquan bands with which she worked, there would be little cause for criticism. But her inclusion of western Montagnais-Naskapi bands, especially the Mistassini, in her interpretation weakens her argument. There is no evidence that the western Montagnais-Naskapi were communal caribou hunters at the time of contact. On the contrary, since small hunting groups already existed, they could not have arisen as a result of the fur trade.

Steward dealt with the Algonkians of Eastern Canada within the framework of a more comprehensive study dealing with hunters and gatherers throughout the world. His basic contention is that environmental forces determine the social and economic organization of hunting and gathering peoples. His ideas of "cultural ecology" are stimulating, but he disregards non-environmental variables which may be important in moulding a people's way of life.

Steward argued that the eastern Algonkians formerly depended on cooperative caribou hunting by a band of several hundred persons. After the introduction of the fur trade, trapping became of primary importance, and European foods supplied the deficiencies resulting from decreased hunting. The family replaced the band as the socio-economic unit. The adoption of conservation practices and the trapping of small game by family units led to the development of hunting territories.

Historical and ethnological evidence fail to support Steward's position. As noted previously, hunting groups were aboriginal, not the result of the fur trade. In any case, woodland caribou, congregating in small bands, are not easily exploited communally by large numbers of hunters. That the fur trade encouraged the development of hunting territories cannot be denied, but the reasons advanced by Steward are insufficient to account for the phenomenon. Changes in property concepts have been ignored.

Those explanations that attribute both hunting groups and hunting territories to the fur trade are inadequate. Similarly, the arguments presented by Cooper, Speck, and Eiseley are faulty. They considered that both phenomena were basically aboriginal and that the fur trade had no significant effect. These three authors contend that small mammals, especially beaver, were of major importance to the inhabitants at the time of contact. The fauna was non-migratory, non-gregarious, relatively scarce, of restricted home range, and was evenly distributed. Accordingly, game could not be hunted communally. Within the eastern subarctic, solitary hunting coupled with conservation practices provided the most effective system of exploitation. Conservation, in turn, encouraged ownership of the territory exploited, hence hunting territories were aboriginal. Finally, according to these authors, historical evidence suggests that hunting territories had become important before the fur trade.

Cooper, Speck, and Eiseley are correct in assuming that hunting groups are a stable feature in the social organization of the peoples of the eastern subarctic. It is not justifiable, however, to state that such social units are prompted solely by the characteristics of the fauna. Though the game can be exploited most effectively by individual hunters, it does not follow that hunting group size must be uniformly small. Game densities increase from east to west within the eastern subarctic. Accordingly, areas of the same size at Mistassini and Pekangekum[1] support different numbers of people. But hunting group size is relatively constant throughout the entire eastern subarctic, whereas hunting territory size decreases westward. The size of hunting territories, therefore, correlates with game density, not with group size, which remains a constant. An upper limit for hunting group size cannot be attributed solely to game characteristics; rather, it is believed that at least some of the factors discussed previously operate throughout the eastern subarctic to limit group size.

The historical evidence cited by various students in support of the existence of hunting territories among the Montagnais in the early contact period is questionable. The early observers applied European concepts in describing native customs, thereby distorting the picture. Although conservation might encourage ownership of territories, evidence indicates that conservation was not practised until late in the nineteenth century. Hunting territories are a late development related to the influence of the fur trade.

The examination of previous theories as to the factors responsible for hunting groups and hunting territories has shown that these theories are inadequate. The fact that hunting groups and hunting territories are independent variables having separate histories was not recognized. Cooper, Speck, and Eiseley were right in noting the antiquity of the hunting group, but they did not fully appreciate the multiplicity of factors involved in the limitation of hunting group size. Furthermore, the available evidence indicates that hunting territories are a recent development rather than an aboriginal feature as these authors believed. Steward, Leacock, Jenness, and Bailey rightly attributed the development of hunting territories to the fur trade but did not isolate all the factors involved; they wrongly attributed hunting groups to the influence of the fur trade.

Conclusion

The present study has examined the factors limiting maximal and minimal sizes of hunting groups and contributing to the development of hunting territories among the Mistassini Indians of south-central Quebec and among the Montagnais in general. The factors involved are multiple, arising from the interaction of environment and technology, of economic, religious, and social patterns, and of acculturation. The upper and lower limits of hunting group size are determined by separate sets of factors. The two sets oppose each other, imposing a relatively narrow size range on hunting groups. Most of the factors, except for those dependent on acculturation, have been operative since pre-contact times. Accordingly, one cannot consider hunting groups a recent development as they represent an old social pattern. Hunting territories, on the other hand, are a post-contact phenomenon. Acting in conjunction with particular cultural patterns common to the Mistassini and Montagnais, they result from factors inherent in the fur trade. It is suggested on the basis of data presented in previous sections that formerly hunting areas existed which with contact evolved into hunting territories. These, today, are being replaced by trapping territories.

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[1] Pekangekum is located in northwestern Ontario near the Manitoba border.

Previous theories have not been adequate because the proponents of these theories did not take into account the separate origins of hunting groups as opposed to hunting territories and did not recognize the multiplicity of factors responsible for these phenomena. Explanations based on a single determinant are insufficient; the answer lies in the interaction of multiple factors.

The factors discussed in this paper are thought to explain the situation as it exists at Mistassini. It would be hazardous to claim that they apply equally outside this area.[1] Only after intensive field-work among other bands of the eastern subarctic could a general theory be advanced to explain the constant size of hunting groups and the development of hunting territories throughout the entire eastern subarctic.

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[1] Data collected among the Round Lake Ojibwa of Northern Ontario, however, tend to confirm the ideas advanced here (Rogers, The Round Lake Ojibwa, p. c22-c24.

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